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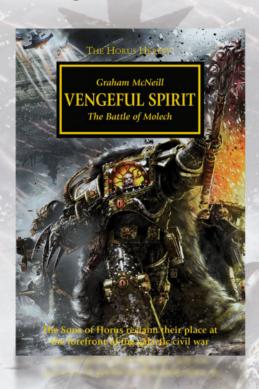




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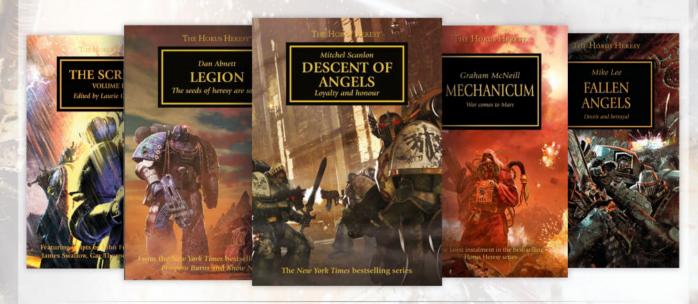
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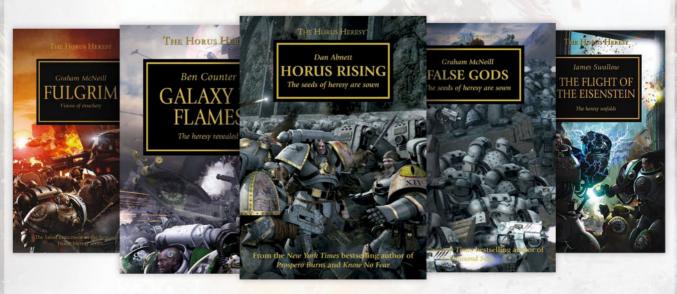
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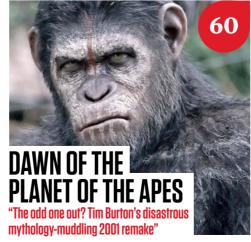
Welcome to SFX!

Issue 248 • July 2014









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Take this wherever you go...



TALES OF WAR FROM THE GRIM DARKNESS OF THE FAR FUTURE

🔞 blacklibrary.com 🎇



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Ooh, it's such a pain compiling this page: getting sent toys, playing with them...



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A Sinister Six movie throws up all kinds of tantalising possibilities: you debate them right here.

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Everyone loves giant monsters, but how well do you really know them?

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Karen Gillan deals with a haunted mirror and Ryan Reynolds with a talking cat in the latest horror movies Penny's covering.



RECALL Richard Edwards loves '50s film posters. They're not so sure about him.



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WELCOME

THE INSIDE SKINNY

What your SFX chums are thinking about...

RAVES

After half a season of mediocre storytelling, Agents Of SHIELD finally



Agents Or SHELD Inally got interesting.

Had a great time at the London Book Fair. Did you join Stephen Baxte and me for the fun Terry Pratchett talk?

I hear rumours of a standalone Mystique film...

...and vet still no Wonder Woman film? Pull your socks up, DC





The Goonies 2 can't be a good idea, can it? It's heen 30 years!

NICK SETCHFIELD





RANTS

The news that Germany will release An Adventure In Space And Time on Blu-ray ces its absence from UK shelves all the more puzzling. Come on, Beeb - it deserves it







liked the cut of its jib.
I'm a queer fish: have no desire to see new
Godzilla film, but now in the mood to catch up
with the old Toho flicks!

I might actually go and pay for Edge O Tomorrow. Can't resist a high-concept



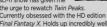
Highly recommended listening: Toby Hadoke's two Who's Round podcast chats with Russell T Davies

http://bit.ly/whosround.

Current reading: volume one of Batman: The Silver Age Dailies, a gorgeous collection of Adam West-era strips from 1966-1967.







Sad to see Living has dropped Supernatural. If any show deserved better treatment...

JON COATES

RAVES Have to get me some of those Game Of Thrones Citizen Bricks.

Citizen Bricks.

The chimps in Dawn Of
The Planet Of The Apes
The Vincredibly realistic. Perhaps now might be a good time for PG Tips to remake their classic TV ads?

RANTS Surely the new Fantastic Four remake can't be as dreadful as rumours would have us believe?

RAVES

Wreck-It Ralph 2 is in the works - yippee

think it looks that bad.

Really hope the sequel to The Goonies no ns, would definitely ruin the magic of

DAVE GOLDER

to bore you with, watched Spaceballs for the first time eve

recently. Blimey, its reputation is well and truly deserved. The bit here they jam a signal using an actual jar of jam must rate as the single worst gag in movie history, and Pizza the Hut (or whatever lame attempt at a comedy name they gave him) just made me want to vomit.

ADRIAN HILL

invited to Reading



invited to keading College to talk all things sci-fi. I was also invited back to judge a competition to find the best invention created by the students. The winning entry was an amazing trebuchet (huge catapult) that would not have looked out of place on the Game Of Thrones set. Future movie set builders I think! Special thanks to Zoe Grant and Claire Davies

ED PRIOR

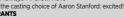
RAVES Games Of Thrones is finally back and it's still awesome. Although someone should tell the



The Walking Dead's final ep was a brilliant end to season four's near-perfect second likudos to new showrunner Scott Gimple. People who call Daenerys "khaleesi" as if that's her name should all be sent to the Wall.

ALICE Pattillo

seauel, or the 12 Monkeys TV show. I love



Still massively bummed out by the TMNT casting choice of Megan Fox as April O'Nei The new "nosey" turtles aren't helping me warm towards the film either.

IOTOGRAPHED BY JAMES LOOKER

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reator of the X-Men, Stan Lee, has said that his uncanny team was created as an "antibigotry" message. Sure enough, the stories about Professor

Xavier's X-Men tackle themes of diversity in a way that many other superhero tales don't unpowered humans seem inexplicably more fearful of the mutants than they do of any other superheroes in the Marvel pantheon, for instance. But this is one of the key joys of the X-Men, a reason why they still resonate with readers and viewers after 51 years and half a dozen movies. Prejudices about sexuality are subtly explored; the fact that powers manifest at puberty creates a powerful coming-of-age narrative. But criticism of racism (including anti-semitism as explored with Magneto's suffering at the hands of the Nazis) is very obviously tackled - in Chris Claremont's classic "Days Of Future Past", mutants are hunted down and put in internment camps by Sentinels. Can Bryan Singer bring this convincingly to the big screen? We'll find out on Thursday 22 May but there's a sneak peek - including interviews with Singer and his stars - over on page 48.

Meanwhile, I hope comic fans enjoy the picture above as much as I enjoyed being in it. What would you prefer, yellow Spandex?

Dave Bradley, Editor-in-Chief

@SFXDaveB



STUFF GETS SERIOUS

SOUTH OF THE RIVER

PC PETER GRANT IS ON THE CASE





www.sfx.co.uk

SCI-FACT! e original penny dreadfuls were serialised story publications in the Here Be Monsters Who's who in Penny Dreadful... THE GUNFIGHTER "He's a great character because he blows in like a "You're just riveted by the presence of the man and by his voice which has this incredible breath of fresh air," says Harris of Ethan Chandler, played by Josh timbre. There was no way that he wasn't going to do his own stunts. it's Billie Piper, very beautiful and Hartnett. "He's come to town with a Wild West show, which is something that was very common He's absolutely the James Bond sexy. She's dazzled by this world that she's found herself in." that you remember in terms of his physicality. He's a very tough guy in the Victorian era. He was a but also very debonair, which is MOVING PICTURES what the character he plays is." sharp shooter but he gets caught "Dorian Gray is played by up with the rest of our characters DOWN ON HER LUCK and decides to stay in London to Reeve Carney. With him, as help Sir Malcolm and Vanessa. He's with many of the characters, John was fascinated by people who are a character with many layers but "Billie Piper plays an Irish he's a very charismatic presence, immigrant who has come to to some extent outsiders. Dorian like Josh Hartnett himself." London and has ended up having Gray is an archetypical outsider to sell herself for sex," says Harris because of what he's done and his **ADVENTURE HAS A** of Piper's character Brona Croft. ethereal beauty which sets him "In many ways she is at the apart but also we know that there emotional heart of the show and a is a painting hidden away lot of the most moving scenes somewhere. With the characters, Timothy Dalton plays famed involve Brona. I think she's John had a sense that they were African explorer Sir Malcolm. somebody that people will really all outsiders and people travelling identify with. She's incredibly "He's one of those actors who just with secrets which set them apart mesmerises you," says Harris. from the rest of humanity." gutsy and charming and because SFX July 2014





"We've never had an incident where they've asked us to censor it"

immersed in horror novels. "What's fabulous about the show is that it manages to combine being a gothic horror show with being a very grown up adult period drama. It ticks all the boxes and it's as satisfying and complex as any character driven period drama you can think of."

The producers have assembled a cast overflowing with big names, including Timothy Dalton as fearless explorer Sir Malcolm, Eva Green as the medium Vanessa Ives, Josh Hartnett as gunslinger Ethan Chandler, Billie Piper as the prostitute Brona Croft, plus Reeve Carney as Dorian Gray, Harry Treadaway as Frankenstein and Rory Kinnear as his creation. "It is really an ensemble piece," says Harris, "but I think it's fair to say that Vanessa is really at the heart of the whole thing. She's really the focal mystery of the show."

The teasers and trailers that have emerged to date drip with menace, atmosphere and the promise of terror. Here in the UK the series will air on Sky Atlantic but its home in the US will be the cable channel Showtime, a platform that allows Logan and co to bypass the delicate sensibilities of terrestrial TV broadcasters. "You can push the envelope much more on cable and in fact we've never had an incident where they've wanted us to censor anything or pull anything back, sometimes almost the opposite," says Harris, "They've been really supportive in terms of realising everything John had written on the page. My main TV background most recently is Call The Midwife and obviously that's out at 8 o'clock on a very mainstream channel here and indeed PBS in America so it's the complete opposite. We're always super sensitive about what people say and do and not showing anybody hardly even kissing let alone having sex whereas this is at the other end of the spectrum."

Directing duties on the series are shared between four directors, each taking two episodes apiece. The crucial opening two instalments were in the hands of Juan Antonio Bayona, no stranger to the world of horror from the Spanish spinechiller The Orphanage. "Bayona was instrumental in creating the visual look," explains Harris, "he chose the cinematographer and the editor and in collaboration with us he chose the designer and the costume designer, make-up designer and so on. What was great about having John on set was he was able, in the crossovers between directors, to absolutely ensure that the style Bayona set up at the beginning was followed right the way through so it feels totally cohesive. I think you'd be hard pushed to work out who directed which episode because it feels totally of a piece."

The production took place in Dublin where the team recreated Victorian London in painstaking detail. "What we always talked about when we were working on the early drafts of the script was that in order to create what is quite a fantastical story, it has elements of horror and fantasy, it was crucial that it was all rooted in a reality," says Harris. "When we were designing the show we wanted it to look very, very real, almost gritty, so that the streets felt like they would have in Victorian London and not over-designed in the way that sometimes you get with horror. John wanted the opposite. He felt that you earned the right to tell these big, bold stories if the backdrop was always rooted in a reality and that made the storytelling and the moments of horror and suspense more chilling if the audience is taken to them via what appears to be a recognisable Victorian London which feels very truthful."

"The show is very surprising in the way that John has used the horror genre, subverted it and played with it," concludes Harris. "He's quite fluid and experimental in what he's done. Horror fans will hopefully love the series."

Penny Dreadful will air on Sky Atlantic from late May.

Glass Effect Karen Gillan finds something nasty in her reflection **IRRORS HAVE ALWAYS** been good for a scare, but there's never been a horror-movie mirror quite like the one at the heart of From wall cracks to Oculus, writer-director Mike Flanagan's follow-up to his thriller Absentia. Starring Doctor Who's Karen Gillan, Oculus tells the tale of the Lasser Glass, a mirror that warps the minds of those who gaze into it, compelling them to perform acts of violence against those closest to them. Gillan's character, Kaylie, is out to prove her brother Tim (Maleficent's Brenton Thwaites) innocent of a crime that destroyed their parents (Rory Cochrane and Battlestar Galactica's Katee Sackhoff) when they were children. It's a crime for which she believes the Lasser Glass is responsible. It's an adaptation of Flanagan's acclaimed short film of the same name. For the feature, the filmmaker interwove two separate "This is an organic stories - that of Kaylie and Tim (set in the present) and that of their creature digesting the souls of people it comes into parents (set in the past). "The idea was always that we could take these two stories," Flanagan tells Red Alert," and braid them in a way that the transitions [would] get tighter and tighter and contact with" tighter and bounce back more and more frequently, hopefully to the point where we can no longer tell the July 2014



difference any longer and the characters can't tell the difference any longer.

"Especially when you're dealing with a monster that's an inanimate object, the only way you could sustain tension over a long period of time was to create a sense of distortion that would be similar to the viewer as it was for Tim and Kaylie."

"One of the things I loved about the script," adds Gillan, "was the time that was devoted to the characters. We see them develop before things happen to them so we're invested and we earn the scares."

According to Flanagan, a mirror and frame were designed specifically for the film based on the role they would play. "We wanted to design our own thing... There's something really awesome that they did with the mirror, which is when you get really close to it the frame itself is comprised of these writhing humanoid forms that are interlocked. You can't really see it from a few feet away. You have to get right up against it to really pick up that detail. There's only one shot where you can see that, in the basement of the auction house.

"The idea was that this was an organic creature that was digesting the souls of the people it would come into contact with. We had an idea early on that the frame had been growing subtly over the years as it kept feeding. Looking at it as a living thing was really important to the design.

Oculus has found distribution through the efforts of indie horror mogul Jason Blum (Paranormal Activity, Insidious). "A studio would never make this movie," Blum explains. "It would never get made under a traditional 30-million-dollar Carrie type format, a studio-produced horror movie as opposed to a studio-distributed horror movie. I love that. I thought it was really original. I was psyched to help out." SFX

Oculus is released on Friday 13 June.



- Ridley Scott is working on a second HALO series for Xbox Live. Unlike Steven Spielberg's Halo show, Scott's production will be a more modest budget, feature-length production akin to Halo 4 prequel web-series Forward Unto Dawn.
- Syfy has gone commissioning crazy, announcing four new series. Zombie show Z-NATION airs this autumn, while a 12-part EYS series and god-centric drama Olympus will debut in 2015. Also look out for ten episodes of THE **EXPANSE**, an adaptation of James SA Corey's Leviathan Wakes that's been described as "Game Of Thrones in space" Cool, space opera is back!
- Channel 4, Kudos and **Xbox Entertainment** Studios are teaming on ANS. It's a remake of the Swedish show Real Humans set in a parallel present where robotic servants are the must-have gadget.
- The troubled adaptation of Brian M Bendis' POWE found a new home at PlayStation. The ten-part series will be available exclusively through Sony's consoles.

Continued on p14.

FILMED IN SUPERMARIONATION

String Theory

New documentary untangles Gerry Anderson's legacy



"I SUPPOSE I DON'T REMEMBER A TIME WITHOUT Thunderbirds, it's something that made a huge impact on me as a kid," says Stephen La Rivière, whose love for all things Gerry Anderson manifested first in the book Filmed In Supermarionation and now in a brand new documentary of the same title. To showcase the innovative techniques used in the creation of Anderson's shows, La Rivière shot new footage using the real puppets - a dream come true.

"You've seen all the pictures from when they were making Thunderbirds and Stingray and Captain Scarlet, and suddenly it's there in front of you. 'Oh my god, I can't believe it, I'm getting to actually do it!' and then very quickly all that vanished," says Rivière. "The puppets are much more frustrating than they'd ever told you. They can't do anything at all. You go in thinking, 'I'm equipped for this because I've talked to people who were there,' and then realise that there are no words to convey just how tough it is."

La Rivière scored a major coup convincing Sylvia Anderson and David Graham to voice their Thunderbirds

> characters Lady Penelope and Parker, although the technicians who worked with them remain modest about their work. "They don't really see just how big what they did was." says Rivière. "They were ashamed to be working in

the uncooperative puppets only increased Rivière's respect for Anderson's team. "I don't know how they did it," he says. "I really

understand now why Gerry called them Little Bastards."

SCI-FACT! As well as Parker, David Graham also provided the voice of Brains in Thunderbirds.

children's television with puppets." The challenge of working with

Filmed In Supermarionation will be released this autumn.

get real big'

George RR Martin hints that Game Of Thrones

might be looking for a big-screen finale

VERA ANDERSON/WIREIMAGE (1)

"It might need a feature to tie things up, something with a feature budget, like \$100 million for two hours. Those dragons



AFTERLIFE #90

Dee Wallace





EE WALLACE BEGAN HER career doing guest roles in the 1970s on television shows such as Lucas Tanner, CHiPs, Police Story and Man From Atlantis before moving on to features like The Hills Have Eyes. Her breakthrough performance in Blake Edwards' "10" led to leading roles in The Howling, Cujo, The Frighteners and her most famous role as Elliott's mum, Mary, in ET The Extra-Terrestrial. Going as Dee Wallace-Stone in the '80s, she often appeared with late husband Christopher Stone. She also starred in the TV series Sons & Daughters in 2006, and has recently appeared on Warehouse 13, Grimm, and in Rob Zombie's The Lords Of Salem.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO PLAY MARY AGAIN?

Absolutely! She was the role of a lifetime.

WHAT'S THE STRANGEST REQUEST YOU'VE HAD FROM A FAN?

A fan asked me to do the scream from the Halloween scene for them at a convention once.

WOULD ANY OF MARY'S SKILLS HAVE BEEN USEFUL IN REAL LIFE?

You bet, her coping mechanism.

WHAT WOULD SHE BE DOING NOW?

I think she'd be dating a really hot guy and making a life of her own. After all, the kids would all be grown up and out of the house now.

IS THERE ANYTHING UNFINISHED ABOUT MARY'S STORY?

There was a B-story about ET loving her from afar that didn't make it into the finished film. In the novelisation, he called her "willow creature". I would love to have had a gentle, tender scene where she could have interacted with ET.

DID YOU GET ANY SOUVENIRS FROM THE SET?

I had my leopard dress, but sadly it's been sold.

IS THERE ANYTHING FROM ET THAT YOU WISH WAS REAL?

The love and the camaraderie and the message that you have to keep your heart open to get back home.

WHAT WOULD IT SAY ON MARY'S GRAVESTONE?

"She did her best."



- Paramount has to TV, and is
- TNT has greenlit a TV spin-off from its THI . IBRARIAN movie series Former X-Man Rebecca Romiin and Falling Skies' Noah Wyle will star in the show, about a secret organisation protecting the world from mythological treasures. Warehouse 14, anybody?
- Though it's yet to be officially greenlit, A **CARTER** writers Christopher Markus and Stephen McFeely have said the show is likely to be a 13-episode limited series, and will feature a recurring role for Howard Stark.

SHOWRUNNING

• GAME OF THRONES will return for seasons five and six, little surprise given the season four premiere became HBO's most-watched broadcast since The Sopranos finale, with a very healthy 6.6 million viewers.

FROM DUSK TILL DAWN: THE SERIES and GRIMM have both been granted new season orders.

Continued on p18.



It's life after Homo sapiens in Mike Carey's new comic

IKE CAREY AND SALVADOR Larroca's graphic novel No More Humans is timed to coincide with Bryan Singer's big-screen take on Days Of Future Past. However, Carey believes that it has more in common with 1982 graphic novel God Loves, Man Kills.

"That was a hard-hitting story about prejudice and how the X-Men can fall foul of various political and religious agendas," Carey tells Red Alert. "We're sailing in similar waters as we pose this big question of how do two species live side by side in a world with limited resources?"

No More Humans' premise is neatly summed up by its title. "The X-Men find themselves in a situation where there is no longer a human population on Earth," explains Carey. "Every sentient being now has one thing in

common and that's the X-gene, as

With its early scenes of X-Men exploring a deserted New York City, No More Humans has echoes of early episodes of The Walking Dead. "One of the remarkable but disturbing things about that show is that the end of the world doesn't actually change anything," notes Carey. "People still have the same prejudices, fears and

everybody else has disappeared."

hatreds."

"We love Ultron from the comics, and have always loved Ultron, and at no point do we want him to just be a robot. We want him to have an extreme personality and attitude"

Marvel overlord Kevin Feige bows down to the Avengers 2 bad guy.

SCI-FACT!

The Phantom Menace.

No More Humans is published on Wednesday 7 May.



STAR TURN

Eddie McClintock

Agent Pete Lattimer on Shatner impressions, learning Spanish and shutting the door on *Warehouse 13*

FOND FAREWELLS

"It's difficult not to see everybody I've spent the last five years with. I'll look back at *Warehouse 13* as one of the great times of my life. I watched my boys grow up, I may have even grown up a little myself. Don't tell anyone I said that or I'll have to kill you."

BUILDING CHARACTER

"At the beginning of the series Jack [Kenny, showrunner] said, 'Who do you want this character to be?' So we had some input. I think that made it a lot easier to play these characters because, for me, there wasn't a whole lot of acting involved. I just showed up to work in the morning and acted a fool, just like me!"

LANGUAGE BARRIER

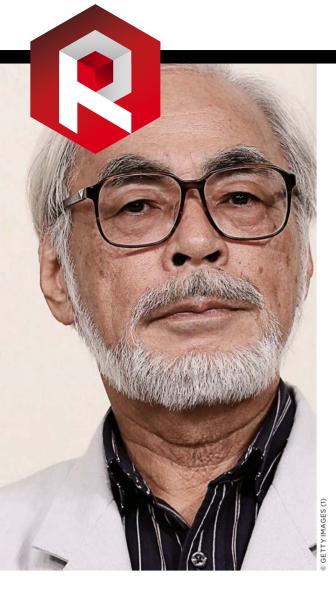
"There's an episode, 'Savage Seduction'. Jack said, 'You'll have to learn Spanish' because we get caught in a Spanish telenovela. It was probably the hardest I've had to work, but I watched it last night and it's so wild and wacky. I'm so proud of it."

THE FINAL FRONTIER

I like the alternate universe Warehouse 13. It's very clean and contemporary. I liked Warehouse 9 too. There was actually a dream come true moment in that episode when I finally, after years of doing it alone, got to do my 'Shatner' impression. Jack finally let me unleash a 'Shatner' in the premiere."

WAREHOUSE CLEARANCE

It cleaned the place out! I wanted the Tesla rifle and Syfy was kind enough to let me have it. I got my cast mates to sign it and I'm gonna mount it and put it in my house as a monument to an amazing time in my life. I took gloves, shirts, clothes, all kinds of stuff... There'll be an auction later this month."



LAPUTA CASTLE IN THE SKY (1986)

A FLYING CASTLE AS THE PRIZE

One of Miyazaki's best-known images is the flying girl, whether borne by glider (Nausicaa), broomstick (Kiki) or coiling dragon (Chihiro). But Laputa has the purest expression of the idea, as a little boy from a hardy mining village (inspired by Miyazaki's trip to Wales during the '80s miners' strike) sees a girl float down from the heavens, glowing with the light of a levitation stone. No wonder he thinks she's an angel...





MY NEIGHBOUR TOTORO

IN THIS CLASSIC, TWO YOUNG SISTERS MEET NATURE SPIRITS IN THE JAPANESE COUNTRYSIDE.

Little Satsuki and Mei are waiting anxiously for their daddy at a forest stop, in the dark night, in softly pouring rain. The suspense is masterful. And then... footsteps, and a creature walks up, unthreatening, just deeply wonderful. Unlike ET, he's completely of this world, even if only children can see him. He's Totoro, an ancient spirit of nature, come to stand at a bus stop in a rainy Japanese wood.



PORCO ROSSO (1992) PIGS DO FLY IN THIS PERIOD COMEDY-DRAMA, ABOUT A SWINE-FACED HERO PILOT IN 1920S EUROPE.

Explaining how he became a pig, Porco tells a sublime story of an aerial WW1 fight which became a beatific experience. Emerging from a great white cloud, Porco finds himself in a silent sky where the planes of the dead rise up and up, former combatants joining the greatest fleet of all. The scene's inspired by a tale from Roald Dahl, a flying ace himself. The image is also referenced in The Wind Rises.



MEDIEVAL JAPAN.

Dawn over a primeval forest. Tiny white homunculi, nature spirits, sit on the tree-tops, rattling their pebble heads to greet the giant god that materialises from the dying night like a ghostly Godzilla. Then the deity shrinks and transforms, becoming a deer creature with an alien face. Plants sprout and wither as it treads towards the wounded hero Ashitaka... The "white hart" scene in Snow White And The Huntsman is widely seen as a homage.



SPIRITED AWAY (2001) A LITTLE GIRL IS TRAPPED IN A REALM OF GODS AND MONSTERS, IN THIS JAPANESE ALICE IN WONDERLAND.

Spirited Away's most memorable scene is also the most tranquil and dreamlike. Chihiro boards a train that runs over the sea. Her fellow passengers are only shadows. According to Miyazaki, he meant to recreate a young person's first experience of taking a train alone. People "remember nothing of the landscapes because they are so focused on the ride itself".

HAYAO MIYAZAKI

Hayao Silver

Five great fantasy moments from the Studio Ghibli legend

HE WIND RISES. THE LAST FILM directed by Japanese animation master Hayao Miyazaki - well, he says it is - opens this month. It's more realistic than his past films, with only brief flights of fancy, but it seems a good time to look back at Miyazaki's greatest moments of fantasy cinema.

The Wind Rises is released on Friday 9 May.

DRAMATIC ANIME AND VIDEO GAME IN ONE PACKAGE!



■ Includes 4 anime movies from the SHORT PEACE Project, led by Katsuhiro Otomo





directed by Hajime Katoki

■ And a fast-paced action game by Suda 51!





directed by Katsuhiro Otomo





■ RANKO TSUKIGIME'S LONGEST DAY









- POSSESSIONS



AVAILABLE AT GAME











MY SCI-FI

Jim Al-Khalili

The theoretical physicist and TV presenter sorts the science fiction from the science fact.

FAVOURITE SF/FANTASY MOVIES

Probably *The Matrix*. I think it's just the whole premise that our reality is a simulation and it's obviously very cool as well. I loved 2001: A Space Odyssey. I thought Gravity was a wonderfully immersive experience, and I loved Contact, because it deals with issues about the nature of space and time, taking modern physics and Einstein's theories and pushing those ideas to an extreme.

FAVOURITE SF/FANTASY TV

Star Trek I was a huge fan of, though I never got into The Next Generation and certainly not the other spin-offs. For me, the original Star Trek was no-nonsense sci-fi exploring new planets, meeting aliens and weird people, but I thought the later ones became much more soap opera. In recent years I think the one sci-fi series that I absolutely adored was Firefly. There was just something about the mix of the future and the pioneering Western frontier adventure about it. It sort of reminded me a little bit of the original Star Trek.

FAVOURITE SF/FANTASY BOOKS

I read Arthur C Clarke and Asimov as anyone who likes SF would probably do, but Heinlein was

probably my favourite as a young man - my favourite is probably Stranger In A Strange Land. In recent years I've really enjoyed Iain M Banks' Culture series. That very far future world was something that I loved.

FAVOURITE SF/FANTASY COMICS

Comics were very much part of my life. I grew up in Iraq and my grandparents would send over comics from England. When we were young there'd be Beano and Dandy, then there'd be Eagle and Dan Dare, and then it was 2000 AD. But what I liked most were probably the Marvel comics. I was always a Spider-Man fan. He had powers, but he was vulnerable as well, and that's what I loved about him.

> Jim Al-Khalili appears in Stephen Hawking's Science Of The Future. on National Geographic Channel on Sunday nights.



Mark Gatiss has said he's writing two new scripts for WHO. Da Vinci's Demons' Tom Riley and Primeval's Ben Miller will guest star in one of the episodes, the latter as a "storming"

ONCE UPON A TIME
N WONDERLAND has been cancelled. But there is some good news for Wonderland fans -Michael Socha (the Knave of Hearts) is expected to join the cast of big daddy show ONCE UPON A
TIME when it's (almost definitely) renewed for

Creator Ryan Murphy has revealed that

season four.

RY's next season will be subtitled Freak Show, confirming that it will take place at a carnival. The Shield's Michael Chiklis has also joined the cast alongside a raft of returning stars.

THE BIG BANG
THEORY is working with Lucasfilm to film a special Star Wars-themed episode set on May the fourth, with scenes filming on a Dagobah set.

The second season of Netflix's werewolf drama **HEMLOCK GROVE** has been confirmed for an 11 July return..

Continued on p27.



Toy Story

Hasbro action figure titans face off



ITH TRANSFORMERS celebrating their 30th anniversary this year and GI Joe reaching an impressive halfcentury, IDW is launching its inaugural crossover title between Hasbro's two leading toys. Known best for his work on Joe Casey's Image series Godland, Tom Scioli has proved to be an inspired curveball choice to write and draw July's Transformers Vs GI Joe. "I'm just trying to come up with the best ideas I can,"

says Scioli, who is co-scripting with Transformers: Robots In Disguise writer John Barber. "This comic is pretty crazy and there are a lot of wild things that I haven't seen done before with these characters. But these properties have been around long enough that there's no fear in pushing the boundaries." Revealing that it's all about "mutual

fascination and fear", Transformers Vs GI

Joe will bring the two factions together in a way that's never been seen before. "When they first meet, we don't quite recognise them for what they are," says Scioli. "It's

in the heat of a massive battle and the GI Joe team assumes that the Transformers are just the latest piece of enemy hardware. While the Transformers are so caught up in their own drama, they pay the GI Joes little regard."

"Things start fast and hard, and it's pretty grand and operatic from the get-go," adds Barber. "But once the two sides realise what each other are, and what's going on

- things get bigger!" 👀



"I'm paraphrasing Steve Jobs. It's like vou don't give the audience or the consumer what they want, you give them what they don't even know they want"

Dark Knight writer David S Goyer explains why he doesn't do what the internet tells him to do.

SCI-FACT!

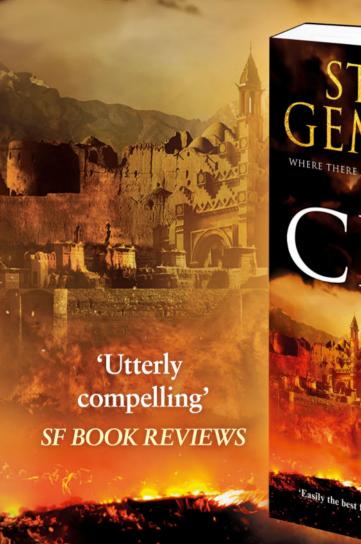
The term "action figure" was coined by Hasbro for GI Joe, as it thought boys wouldn't

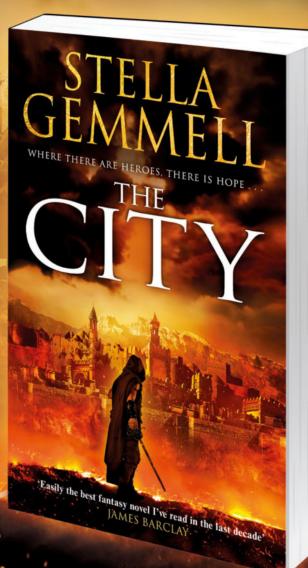
Transformers Vs GI Joe #0 is available on Free Comic Book Day (3 May) before the monthly series begins in July.

Likes his sci-fi

spacey, not soapy.

IMMORTAL COMBAT...





'Thrilling and devastating'

SCIFI NOW

'The most satisfying, intelligent and enthralling epic fantasy I've read in many a year'

JULIET E. McKENNA

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SCI-FACT!

from the Latin "Panem et Circenses" - "bread and games"

THE DOSSIER

Katniss joins the revolution in the catchily titled

The Hunger Games: Mockingjay, Part 1

WHAT'S KATNISS UP TO NOW?

When we last saw the bowing belle of District 12, she was being carted off by rebels to the fabled-and-decidedly-unwiped-out District 13. So expect Katniss to spend a goodly portion of *Mockingjay, Part 1* mulling over her new propaganda role in the revolution – as the iconic Mockingjay – before inevitably taking a leading role in the decisive battle against President Snow and the Capitol, a battle that'll take a devastating personal toll on our Kat.

SO WE'LL GET TO SEE DISTRICT 13 THIS TIME...

Yep, and it's there that reluctant pin-up Katniss meets a whole new set of characters. Chief among these are the propaganda team, led by Natalie Dormer's shaven-headed Cressida alongside Messalla (Evan Ross) and photojournos Castor and Pollux (Wes Chatham and Elden Henson). Another fan-favourite is Kat's bodyguard Boggs (Mahershala Ali), who'll lead a climactic sortie into the Capitol.

WHO'S PULLING THE REVOLUTIONARY STRINGS?

Every revolution needs its Lenin - but is Alma Coin its Stalin? The biggest addition to Panem's expanding role of characters is Coin, District 13's president. When casting the role - as with Philip Seymour Hoffman and Jeffrey Wright -Team Hunger Games have pushed the button marked "class in a morally ambiguous glass":

SOUNDS LIKE THINGS ARE REALLY ABOUT TO, ER, CATCH FIRE...

Dwith the grand finale getting split, the Dossier will lay its regularly abused £5 on the big movie axe landing just as Katniss – on that minor assignment to the Capitol – finds herself taking charge of the big push to President Snow's house: the book's biggest setpiece in the absence of the usual Hunger Games.

"The Capitol *is* the arena," suggests director Francis Lawrence, who'll now get to kick off the otherwise action-light *Part 2* with the majority of the battle's intense warfare. In retaliation, we'd reckon the book's other skirmishes – the rescuing of (brainwarped) Peeta, the hoverbomber assault on District 8 – become heftier action beats.

SURELY SOME PEOPLE WON'T MAKE IT OUT ALIVE?

▶ Katniss's little sister Prim, due a tragic ending at the Capitol battle's finale, will live to see at least another movie, we think. "I'm just trying to avoid thinking about it right now," says actress Willow Shields. "It's one of those scenes that I feel is going to be one of those really sad days, but it could be really cool to shoot."

HOW ARE THEY ADAPTING TO THE DEATH OF PHILIP SEYMOUR HOFFMAN?

The awful news of Philip Seymour Hoffman's passing inevitably caused the Hunger Games' team some issues. While he'd finished his Part 1 scenes as secret

rebel leader Plutarch Heavensbee,
he still had filming left to do on
the franchise's finale, including
one major scene. They're not
recasting though, with
sources suggesting they'll
go down the digital
double route, with
some judicious

character-shifting.

WHEN TO EXPECT IT?

Mockingjay, Part 1 will be out on 21 November 2014 with Part 2 out one year later.



Julianne Moore.

Natalie Dormer rocking the assymetrical look.

EMEMBER WHEN YOU WERE A KID, and thought that if you dug all the way down to Australia, you'd find a load of upside-down people hanging off the Earth? That kind of thinking underpins new anime *Patema Inverted.* A boy in an oppressive future world encounters a *very* strange girl, Patema, who clutches the ground in terror as if she might tumble into the sky. Actually, she might. Patema is from an underground civilisation with inverted gravity, so the boy's up is Patema's down, and vice versa.

"It's a difficult concept, but it's basically a boy-meets-girl adventure love story!" explains writer-director Yasuhiro Yoshiura. He doesn't shy from comparisons with Hayao Miyazaki – Patema Inverted's flying and cliffhanging is reminiscent of Miyazaki's Laputa. However, Yoshiura has imbued his film with a love of classic SF, especially SF twists.

"The kind of twists I like are ones where the world we believe in is fake, and we're actually part of a bigger world," he says, citing Heinlein's *Orphans Of The Sky*.

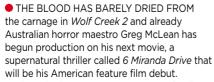
Yoshiura's best-known prior work is *Time Of Eve*, a similarly inventive anime about a cafe that serves humans and robots. *Patema Inverted* has already been acclaimed at last year's Scotland Loves Anime, winning both the audience and jury prizes. It's unrelated to last year's live-action *Upside Down*, which has a comparable premise. "When I was making *Patema Inverted*, the producer came to me and said there's a film with the same concept, which was a shock!" Yoshiura says. "I looked at the poster, then I put it away. I haven't seen the trailer because I didn't want to be influenced."

Patema Inverted is released on Friday 2 May.

6 MIRANDA DRIVE

Up His Street

Wolf Creek director teams up with Kevin Bacon for supernatural thriller



The suburban-set story concerns a family who bring a supernatural force into their home following a vacationing trip to the Grand Canyon. The malevolent entity proceeds to feed off their fears and their secrets.

"The story is based on a true story that was relayed to me first-hand about an actual haunting," the writer-director tells Red Alert. "It was just a very chilling tale I could never forget and I felt would make a great movie."

Kevin Bacon and McLean's fellow Aussie Radha Mitchell (*Pitch Black* and the *Silent Hill* series) have been cast in the leads. "It's no accident that the best horror films also feature the most amazingly truthful performances by great actors," says McLean.



The director admits he's a fan of supernatural horrors including such classics as Robert Wise's original *The Haunting, The Blair Witch Project* and the first *Paranormal Activity.* "I think all these films are extremely scary and I loved *The Conjuring* also – I thought it was a really well made movie and just terrifying."

Here's hoping the director's latest will prove equally as unsettling.

6 Miranda Drive is currently shooting in LA.

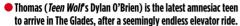




FREEZE FRAME

THIS MONTH:
We explore the
first trailer for
labyrinthine Young
Adult adaptation
The Maze Runner







 Gally (Narnia's Will Poulter) is a Glader with vague memories of Thomas and an intense dislike of him.



 The Glade is where the boys work day in and day out with little purpose. It's surrounded by a giant, unfathomable maze.



 Alby (Aml Ameen) shows Thomas a wall with all the Gladers' names. If you die in the maze your name gets crossed out.



 The latest runners prepare for the maze. One boy arrives in The Glades every month, and it's been going on for a while...



 Game Of Thrones' Thomas Brodie-Sangster plays Newt, a former runner who is now Alby's second-in-command.



 Each night the runners compare routes. Minho (Ki Hong Lee) is the keeper of the runners responsible for mapping the maze.



 Here we get a brief look at a Griever – one of many biomechanical monstrosities that roam the maze at night.



As Thomas and Minho find out, there's much more to the maze than your average tourist attraction. But why...?



 Kaya Scodelario plays Teresa, the first girl and the last person ever to be sent to the Glade. Her arrival triggers the end.



• Gally finds himself in a compromising position. Could he have been placed there by the maze's Creators?



Minho and Thomas run for their lives as the maze collapses.
 Let's hope they survive, there's two more books to adapt yet!

JORDAN



This trailer really piqued my interest. It's got a great cast, an intriguing premise and plenty of hints

there's more to the world than a maze and a field full of chaps.

JAYNE



"What is this place?" is the second line in this trailer. Every time someone comes out with "What is

this place?" in a movie, a kitten dies. Remember this. Then mourn for that poor pussycat.

IAN



Half the YA books I see have a "kids wake up in a mysterious place" premise, and this

looks like a pricey rehash of *Cube*. The only thing that interests me is Effy from *Skins*.

RICH



I'm seeing bits of Cube, Lord Of The Flies, The Hunger Games and more – but it's based on a

genuinely intriguing premise. As long as there's more sci-fi than teen angst, this could be good.

WORKIE ED PRIOR



Yet another dystopian YA adap? Ordinarily I wouldn't bother, but throw in Teen Wolf show-

stealer Dylan O'Brien and Son Of Rambow's Will Poulter and this might be worth a watch.



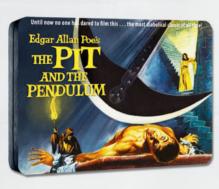






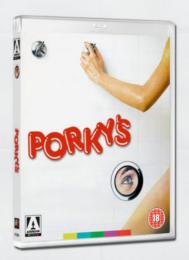
TALES TO TITILLATE AND TERRIFY!

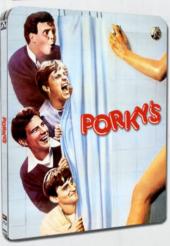












FROM RAUCOUS TEEN ROMPS TO BROODING GOTHIC HORROR, WE'VE GOT YOUR VIEWING (UN)COVERED THIS MAY!

Bob Clark's classic teen sex comedy *Porky's* arrives on Blu-ray for the first time in the UK, whilst *The Pit and*The Pendulum brings together horror legends Vincent Price and Barbara Steele in a tale of terror and torture. Keeping up the blood and guts quotient is gory 80s creature feature *The Beast Within*, and Academy Award and Palme d'Or winning filmmaker Elio Petri's debut feature *L'Assassino* finally makes it to home video on Dual Format Blu-ray and DVD.

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SCI-FACT!
Terry Jones wrote the screenplay for Bowie goblin classic Labyrinth.

MURDERED: SOUL SUSPECT

Grave Investigation

Solve the hardest case of all: your own murder



● IN MURDERED: SOUL SUSPECT, YOU PLAY Ronan O'Connor, a deceased detective solving his own murder. He's a man trapped between worlds in more ways than one. "Ronan is an outsider. He grew up as a thief which makes him an extremely good investigator," says Eric Studer, senior design producer. "He exists between these two worlds as well as being trapped between life and death."

The game opens with Ronan being gunned down by a mysterious hooded man possessing impossible strength. It's your job to track him down, but being a ghost detective comes with its own drawbacks.

"It's a huge hindrance to see a piece of evidence on the ground and not be able to physically interact with it," Studer explains. "But one of his biggest tools is the ability to possess people – you can look through their eyes and hear through their ears."

Murdered is set in Salem which, as well as providing a suitably eerily setting for the story, will be full of optional side missions to flesh out Ronan's world. Crimson demons can also be found roaming crime scenes – an unsettling glimpse at what Ronan could become if he fails. As Studer says, theirs is a unique take on the murder mystery genre.

"Basic legwork, Ronan's ghost abilities and the contextualisation of these clues are the three layers of investigations in the game. Interacting with the clues and using them to find what your next steps are - that's where it really shines."

Murdered: Soul Suspect comes to PS4, PS3, Xbox One, Xbox 360 and PC from Friday 6 June.



Life Of Simon

Simon Pegg gets god-like powers from Monty Python in a new sci-fi comedy

ITH AN IMMINENT LIVE STAGE SHOW AND A NEW movie starring the remaining members of Monty Python in the works, it's a fruitful time to be a fan of the legendary British comedy troupe.

Terry Jones is the driving force behind the latter. He serves as director and writer on *Absolutely Anything*, which stars Simon Pegg as Neil Clarke – a disillusioned schoolteacher who suddenly has the god-like power to do "absolutely anything" bestowed on him by aliens out to test humanity. John Cleese, Michael Palin, Eric Idle, Terry Gilliam and Jones himself are providing voices for the all-powerful ETs.

Jones originally started writing a film inspired by HG Wells' *The Man Who Could Work Miracles* almost 25 years ago. The script came together several years later, but was put in a drawer after *Bruce Almighty*, which Jones admits "has a similar premise". So why now? "It's 11 years since *Bruce Almighty* came out, everyone's probably forgotten about it by now!" he laughs.

As well as the Pythons the film features a host of British comedy greats, including Eddie Izzard, Joanna Lumley, Sanjeev Bashkar and Meera Syal.

Robin Williams voices Mojo, a loyal mongrel who's given the power of speech by Neil, while Kate Beckinsale stars as Neil's love interest Katherine. In classic *The Monkey's Paw* fashion, Neil's power to do absolutely anything is as much of a curse as a blessing with every wish taking on a very literal meaning until he's forced into the ultimate conundrum – should he choose the girl or the, er, dog?

"Everything goes wrong for him," says Jones. "The powers are very literal, so Neil says 'me be on the bus' and then he's on top of the bus clinging on for dear life. And then he says 'me be inside the bus' and he's in the engine compartment. It's going to be pretty funny."

Absolutely Anything is currently filming and will be out later this year.

WENN (2)

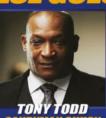
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STADIUM:MK & ARENA, STADIUM WAY WEST, MILTON KEYNES, MK1 1ST

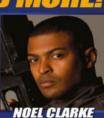
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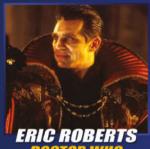
DAVID RAMSEY









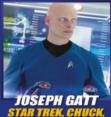






BRIAN THOMPSON ANGELINA LOVE TERMINATOR, CHUCK, 5X THA KNOCKOUTS STAR TREK, X-FILES CHAMPION

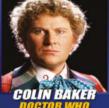




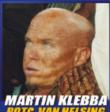


BREAKING BAD













CLAIRE COFFEE



CELINA JADE

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TIM BARLOW

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If The Cap Fits

The Russo brothers on their upcoming threequel

HE WINTER SOLDIER HAS ONLY just emerged from the shadows but directors Anthony and Joe Russo have already signed up to helm Steve Rogers' third cinematic solo excursion. And with screenwriters Christopher Markus and Stephen McFeely dropping hints that the plot could involve "a psychotic 1950s Cap", it seems that he could be set to face another dark nemesis from his past.

"We saw that the boys had that quote about that character from the '50s who lost his mind," admits Joe Russo, presumably referring to the delusional William Burnside, who was so obsessed with Cap that he assumed his identity after the end of World War Two. "We won't confirm or deny that but what I will say is that there is always a lot of smoke and mirrors in the Marvel Universe."

Having learnt their trade on cult series like Arrested Development and Community, the sibling filmmakers understand the importance of audience interaction. "We've really been wanting to wait until this movie was released and to see how people respond," adds Anthony. "It's always been a part of our process to listen to the reaction of the fans. It's not that it tells you anything directly but it does inform your thinking about what works and what's exciting."

"For us, one of the ongoing conversations with the audience was that the island was purgatory. And we were always saying, 'It's not purgatory, this is real, we're not going to Sixth Sense you!"

Damon Lindelof trolls Lost fans at PaleyFest

SCI-FACT!
William Burnside went on pecome The Grand Direct a villain in the Marvel Universe.

AERIAL ASSAULT SF TV ROUND UP



CASTING COUCH

- Some familiar faces will return as regulars for THE WALKING DEAD season five. Terminus leader Gareth (Andrew J West), Rosita (Christian Serratos) and Tara (Alanna Masteron) will all have expanded roles for the show's fifth year.
- D GOTHAM has cast its Riddler. Cory Michael Smyth will play Edward Nygma in the pilot, and could become a series regular.
- Country singer turned actor Dwight Yoakam has joined the cast of UNDER THE DOME. He'll play barbershop owner Lyle Chumley, who has a complicated history with Rig Jim.
- Top British actors Amy Manson (Being Human, Outcasts) and Vincent Regan (300) have joined the cast of ATLANTIS series two, playing Madea and Dion respectively.
- Original Sarah Connor Linda Hamilton is joining the cast of DEFIANCE in a recurring role. She'll play Pilar, the estranged wife of Rafe McCawley
- Samuel L Jackson and Cobie Smulders to appear as Nick Fury and Maria Hill in AGENTS OF SHIELD finale.

NEW AUTHOR

Kieran Shea

Kieran Shea has written short crime fiction for many years, but his debut novel is the SF *Koko Takes A Holiday*.



WHAT WOULD YOU WRITE AS YOUR NOVEL'S COVER BLURB?

A swashbuckling, breakneck-paced send-up with something to offend nearly everyone.

ARE YOU AN ACCIDENTAL SCI-FI AUTHOR?

When [online crime fiction journal] *Plots With Guns* first approached me about a futuristic edition, I'd never written anything even remotely set in the future, but I wanted to give it a shot. It sounds hokey, but after my first two efforts didn't work out, I had this watershed moment and decided to write in a way that I'd always been hesitant to before; the result was the first incarnation of *Koko* and the story was accepted.

THE NOVEL TAKES PLACE ON THE SIXTY ISLANDS, WHICH SOUND LIKE A CROSS BETWEEN IBIZA AND WESTWORLD...

When I was writing the novel, I told my agent I was writing a Western set in the future. In a lot of respects I was turning the clock back and studying what was happening 500 years ago. If you consider the appalling behaviours and entertainments of the 16th century in light of what was touted as respectable, what I did is not much of a stretch, once you throw half a millennium under the bridge and add technology.

KOKO TAKES A HOLIDAY SOUNDS MORE LIKE A JAUNTY COMEDY THAN A HARDBOILED SCI-FI THRILLER...

▶ I think it was a juxtaposition thing that made me laugh. It's like when you watch Michael Madsen sawing off the cop's ear in *Reservoir Dogs* while listening to "Stuck In The Middle With You", there's something so absurd and yet alluring about it.

WHICH SCI-FI OR FANTASY AUTHORS WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE COMPARED WITH IN A DREAM REVIEW?

You're asking me which authors I admire? There are so many!

Koko Takes A Holiday is published on 20 June.

THE THREE

Trio Life

Sarah Lotz on her air disaster SF novel

SOUTH AFRICAN author Sarah Lotz is clear about why her latest novel. The Three, finds a quartet of aeroplanes falling out of the sky on the same dav. "I'm completely flight-phobic," she savs. "I like to write about what scares me because I'm a masochist."



The crashes are the starting point for

a novel that mixes up Lotz's research into crash investigations ("really upsetting stuff") and the worldview of conspiracy theorists. When the Malaysian airliner MH370 was lost, says Lotz, it was downright strange to look at some of what was posted online, the kind of material involving prophecies and the rapture. "It could have been ripped out of the book," she says, "it's really creepy".

Then again, the conspiracy theorists in The Three might just be on to something. Apparently miraculously, three children emerge from the wreckage unhurt, but what to make of another survivor's tale? "On one of the planes, which crashes into a forest in Japan, there's an American woman and just before she dies she sees something weird, a small child slipping through the trees where she's lying on the ground, and she has time to leave a message where she mentions the child," says Lotz.

Meantime, she is working on a follow-up to The Three. It's a novel that works as a standalone but explores some of the same themes and which she describes as a loose sequel. It's set on a liner because: "I also find boats horrifying." Researching the book, Lotz went on a cruise in the Caribbean. "Everyone was drunk," she says, "which is usually fine by me, but when you can't get away from it, it's weird."

"Let me ask you this question: if America were really under attack, would you actually want these SHIELD geeks calling the shots?"

Legendary Marvel writer Jim Steranko asks a pertinent question about Agents Of SHIELD.

> SCI-FACT! eter Mayhew has also played Chewbacca on *The Muppet* Show, Glee and The Star Wars Holiday Special

NEWS WARP ALL FACT, NO FILLER



- Doctor Who's Rani, Kate O'Mara, has died at the age of 74.
- JK Rowling's Harry Potter spin-off Fantastic Beasts And Where To Find Them will now be a trilogy. What's the betting they split the third film in two?
- An Adventure In Space And Time, Black Mirror, In The Flesh, The Returned and "The Day Of The Doctor" all nominated at the Bafta Television Awards.
- The Marvel Cinematic Universe is now the most successful franchise in US history, earning just short of \$2.5 billion in America alone. No wonder Kevin Feige has said the studio has movies planned to 2028!
- Johnny Knoxville and Tony Shalhoub are lending their voices to Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, as Leonardo and Splinter respectively.
- Chronicle 2 has a new screenwriter: Jack Stanley comes on board.
- Doug Liman in talks to direct videogame adaptation Splinter Cell, with Tom Hardy set to star as stealth specialist Sam Fisher.
- **Uncharted** writer Amy Hennig has been hired by EA as creative director on one of their new Star Wars games.

They started shooting without telling anybody!

E THOUGHT THAT

cameras weren't going to roll on Episode VII until May, but Disney Studios chairman Alan Horn let slip in early April that "we're actually shooting some of it now". He dropped the bombshell at an event at Loyola Marymount University School of Film, and also revealed that JJ Abrams and Lawrence Kasdan's script is finally finished. We're assuming those early shots are second unit or visual effects-type stuff (the sort of thing JJ would usually delegate to some kind of minion or apprentice) but it's a reminder of how close the production really is.

Indeed, by the time you read this, we may already know all the actors making a trip to that galaxy far, far away, and even if we don't,

Horn apparently does. "We have a lot of them. It's not completely done yet," he said, describing casting as the toughest part of the whole Star Wars operation. Alas, Horn refused to be more specific about people: "Patience you must

have," he joked in a Yoda voice that suggested he's probably better at running major corporations than he is at instructing younglings in the ways of the Force.

> But it's now looking like Peter Mavhew will

be climbing back into his hairshirt (and hairtrousers) to play Chewbacca for a fifth time. His pulling out of Texas's Comicpalooza convention in

May "due to filming" prompted many to speculate that he must be strapping himself back into the Millennium Falcon. Then, the Hollywood Reporter went one further and cited sources who confirmed he was a lock.

This adds even more weight to the "it can't still just be a rumour, can it?" speculation that Harrison Solo will be back as Han Solo – the thought of Chewbacca wandering around the galaxy without his bestie is just too depressing to contemplate. SF

PAGAN WICKS (1), LARRY ELLIS COLLECTION/GETTY IMAGES

The Three is published on Thursday 22 May.

FRON

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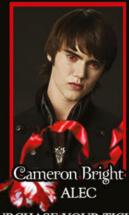
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DEVELOPS DEVELOPS

Your monthly glimpse into Hollywood's hoped-for future

CYLON ON AND ON! BATTLESTAR GALACTICA

As a canny old prophecy has it, all this has happened before, and all this will happen again... Yes, the big screen will soon behold a third take on *Battlestar Galactica*, originally *Star Wars* with ad breaks for the '70s generation and more recently reimagined as a gritty metaphor for 9/11 with a conspicuous lack of disco droids. Universal Pictures has hired **Jack Paglen** – screenwriter of Johnny Depp AI tale *Transcendence* – to pen what *Variety* calls a "complete reimagining of the story". Paglen's

also the writer of Ridley Scott's *Prometheus* sequel, set to enter production this autumn. Original series creator **Glen Larson** remains on duty as producer.

EJIOFOR YOUR EYES ONLY! BOND 24

Situation vacant: Bond villain. Must possess limited people skills and deep-rooted psychosis. Pet cat/piranha optional. 12 Years A Slave star Chiwetel Ejiofor is apparently preferred choice to bring the sinister in Daniel Craig's fourth 007 caper. No formal talks, no official offer, but we like to imagine he's been told that Eon

Productions do not tolerate failure. If the plot whispers are legit, Oscar-nominated Ejiofor could deliver an intriguingly 21st century Blofeld. The search is also on for the film's two female leads, one the primary Bond girl, the other a Scandinavian lady "with a troubled past" who doubtlessly won't make it out of act two alive. Sweden's Ida Engvoll and Disa Ostrand recently screentested.

PREPARE TO MEET YOUR DOOM! FANTASTIC FOUR

Tremble, you pitiable curs! A new master of men walks among you... and the world shall shudder at his

shadow! Sorry - accidentally locked the supervillain key on the keyboard. Fixed now. Yes, Twentieth Century Fox's FF reboot has found its Doctor Doom. Brit Toby Kebbell will play the metal-masked monarch of Latveria, arch foe of Marvel's first family. He's best known for War Horse and Wrath Of The Titans and is said to have beaten the likes of Domhnall Gleeson, Eddie Redmayne and Sam Riley to the role. Ha! Worthless scum! Let them taste the sour wine of failure! Doom laughs at their misfortune! Gah. Touched that key again. So easily done. Fantastic Four arrives

I NOTE ATOM BY DA

RIPE FOR THE SCREEN!

BANANAMAN

▶ They say the world will end in fire, but the smart money's always been on a live-action Bananaman movie. Best head for the hills, people – this most apocalyptic of projects is on course for release in 2015, bringing the mighty-chinned Fyffes-muncher to the big screen in all his blue and yellow glory. Originally seen in the pages of *Nutty* comic before earning his own, Goodies-voiced cartoon in the '80s, Bananaman is the alter ego of Eric Wimp, a kid who transforms into a caped crimebuster every time he eats a banana. His rogues' gallery includes such felons as Bubblegum Bert, Skunk Woman, General Blight and Captain Cream. We imagine the 'nanaverse is beyond even Christopher Nolan's power to ground but we'd pay real money to hear Morgan Freeman intoning "This is 29 Acacia Road and this is Eric, the schoolboy who leads an amazing double life..."

in June 2015 with a sequel already staking out a 14 July 2017 release.

NOT THE REITMAN FOR THE JOB! GHOSTBUSTERS 3

Original Ghostbusters helmer Ivan Reitman has bailed on the director's chair for the third bout, blaming everything from Bill Murray's reluctance to strap on a proton pack to his own encroaching mortality. "I wasn't getting any younger," he tells SpinOff Online. "I'd already done two of them, and I only had so many movies left." The recent death of Harold Ramis also had an impact. "It really focused all of those things, suddenly. I suddenly felt excited about producing a movie with other people directing Ghostbusters, and seeing the opportunity for new ideas and a fresh take for some of the things we built into this draft." The Lego Movie's Phil Lord and Chris Miller were tipped to replace Reitman but reportedly turned it down. Who ya gonna call, Sony?

TOTAL BULLWHIP!

INDIANA JONES V

File under Raiders Of The Lost Crock: yes, it's safe to ignore that recent flurry of internet tossmongering that pegged The A-Team's Bradley Cooper as the new Indiana Jones, wielding the whip in a franchise reboot for Disney, new owners of the fabled fedora. And no, the screenplay's not by Frank Darabont, either. "This is an internet rumour with not a shred of truth in it," he tells AICN. Veteran Indy producer Frank Marshall gave a mighty, despairing sigh and tweeted "Due to the ridiculous rumours that keep popping up, like agents' pipe dreams, I will stop commenting on our projects until I have real news. I can only confirm that Katy Perry will not be the new Indiana

Jones." Pity. She kissed a Grail and she liked it.

SET PHASERS TO ETHICAL DILEMMA! STAR TREK 3

Screenwriter JD Payne is hinting at the story that will warp into cinemas in 2016, just in time for the Enterprise's 50th anniversary. And it sounds as though Trek's next big-screen entry will return to the kind of philosophical roughage found in the classic show. "We're trying to set up a kind of situation where you really could - and not in just an 'everything's relative' sort of moral relativism - be a good person, and come down on both sides of how you should respond to this opportunity that the crew has... that also has some pitfalls to it, where you could argue very, very compellingly that 'this' is what you should do, and if you're advocating 'this' then it's actually evil." So: gratuitous shot of Alice Eve in her smalls or no gratuitous shot of Alice Eve in her smalls?

DOUBLE JEOPARDY! TERMINATOR: GENESIS

Arnold Schwarzenegger

promises two T-800s for the price of one in the next Terminator movie. "Terminator deals a lot with time travel." Austria's finest tells MTV, "so there will be a younger T-800, and then [it's about] what that model does later on when it gets reprogrammed, and who gets a hold of him." And if you're wondering how a visibly older 66-year-old Schwarzenegger will encore as an immortal man machine, read on... "The way that the character is written, it's a machine underneath. It's this metal skeleton. But above that is human flesh. And the Terminator's flesh ages, just like any other human being's flesh." So that explains Bruce Forsyth.

ALSO BURNING



Merlin's KATIE

McGRATH joining Jurassic World...

sequel Through The

Explorers... DAVID
JAMES KELLY writing

The Wolverine 3...

Looking Glass... Paramount remaking

CARTER returning as the Red Queen in Alice

HOLLY HUNTER, CALLAN MULVEY and OTO joining Batman Vs Superman... Iron Man 3 and Thor: The Dark World's YLER scoring The Avengers: Age Of Ultron... Warner Bros adapting Vertigo Comics' FBP: Federal Bureau Of Physics... BILL E and ADAM R writing Assassin's Creed movie... DONNIE YEN starring in Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon 2: The Green Destiny... MATT GERALD and COREY STOLL joining Ant-Man... DREW RD in negotiations to direct Spidey spin-off The Sinister Six... SAMUEL L N in line to return for The Incredibles 2... Fox developing *Chronicle*-style superhero tale Invisible... Prometheus 2 targeting 4 March 2016 release... GI Joe Retaliation's JON M CHU bringing '80s cartoon

Jem And The Holograms to the screen... Pacific Rim sequel still possible... Z IMOU in talks to direct historical supernatural epic Great Wall... TY starring in Scouts Vs Zombies for Paramount... Disney remaking RAY BRADBURY's Something Wicked This Way IRISTIE joining The Hunger Games: Mockingjay, Part 2... and many, many more...

NEXT MONTH!

ISSUE 249

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OCULUS

Doctor Who's Karen Gillan will scare you senseless!

TRANSFORMERS: AGE OF EXTINCTION

Autobots Vs Deceptions... round four! Ding ding!

MALEFICENT

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ILLUSTRATION BY ANDY WATT

Heads We Lose

David Langford takes issue with SF attackers

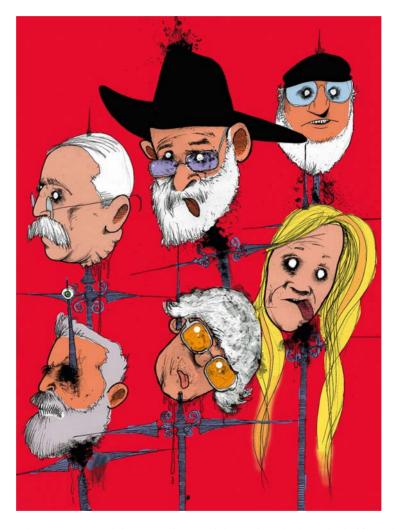
s long ago as SFX #3 in 1995 (has it really been 19 years?), I grumbled about the strange belief that science fiction authors are in the business of predicting the future. No, not really, not any more than thriller writers track down serial killers or romance writers are lured by their own tales of true love into hapless serial bigamy. SF isn't about the future but a future, convincingly argued (we hope) but only one of billions of possible routes through Jorge Luis Borges's famous Garden of Forking Paths...

The traditional canard that SF is all about prediction usually heralds a two-pronged attack from genrephobes. Heads they win: book X didn't get the future right, so it's no good. Tails we lose: book Y pinpointed a coming trend, but has now served its purpose like a discarded booster rocket and need no longer be read.

This grubby gambit was trotted out again in the recent "Which Books Should We Stop Calling Classics?" online symposium at Flavorwire, where literary pundits were encouraged to lead their barbarian hordes into the

Library of Fame for some exhilarating ethnic cleansing. The novelist Katherine Bucknell immediately put the boot into SF: "For me, science fiction classic is an oxymoron. What could possibly go out of date more rapidly than a book imagining what will happen in a future time or place?"

Her idea of what SF readers like and talk about is even stranger: "The discussions I hear about science fiction 'classics' usually focus on how amazing it is that the author was so close to imagining how things really turned out." I see. *The War Of The Worlds* is highly rated, not because it timelessly shows the complacent British Empire getting a taste of its own gunboat diplomacy but because so many close equivalents of Martian



tripods have since devastated the London suburbs with their irresistible Heat Rays. It happens all the time.

Oops, no, it turns out that Wells goes into the dustbin of history along with satirists and adventure writers: "I'm afraid *Brave New World* is the last of Huxley's many interesting books that I would recommend. And I would ditch Jules Verne, HG Wells, and the like." End of bizarre polemic.

Of course turnabout is fair play. Using Katherine Bucknell's own ruthless logic, we can sneer at Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, James Joyce and the rest because they failed in the much easier task of predicting the present day or recent past. Historians and genealogists have sadly confirmed that the characters in their books



- SF writer David Langford has had a column in SFX since issue one
- David has received 29 Hugo Awards throughout his career.
- His celebrated SF newsletter can be found at http://news.ansible.co.uk.
- He is a principal editor of the SF Encyclopedia at http:// www.sf-encyclopedia.com.

Her idea of what SF readers like and talk about is even stranger

are all made up. Conversely, it would seem that HG Wells's The Time Machine can still be a classic because its "predicted" far future hasn't yet failed to happen. That's logic for you.

Since fantasy is so often about impossible worlds and never-never lands, you can't dismiss the genre out of hand by playing the failed-prediction card. Another approach is required, and "literary fiction" author Russell Banks filled the much-needed gap with his brilliant ploy of Making Stuff Up. Writing in the New York Times, he pinpointed the

kind of fiction he took care to avoid: "Anything described by the author or publisher as fantasy, which to me says, 'Don't worry, Reader, Death will be absent here:" Gorblimey.

It is of course notorious that no one ever dies in the wishy-washy *Harry Potter* saga. Sociologists have proved that rumours of a bony Discworld character who ALWAYS SPEAKS IN DOOM-LADEN CAPITALS are entirely baseless. Only Barbara Cartland rivals George RR Martin's *Game Of Thrones* for sentimental niceness, especially in wedding scenes. I need to lie down now.

David Langford luckily ran out of space before getting into the debate about whether some film called Gravity is SF.

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Job Bots

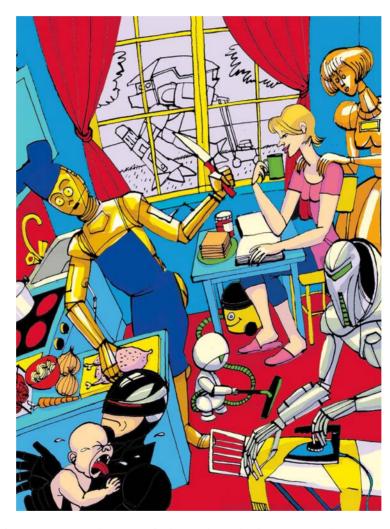
We need robot workers to help us out, insists Bonnie Burton

obots send shivers down our spines when we think of the violence they could unleash with a simple gear gone wrong. Replicants, ED-209, Cylons... we don't have a long lineage of friendly robots in our pop culture legacy.

But the truth is, most robots today - military drones aside - aren't much of a threat. In fact, most do a lot of our dirty work without asking for so much as a nod of gratitude. Roomba vacuums clean up after our latest drunken parties. Automated solar panel washing bots scrub off debris so we can power our homes. Firefighting robots tame the flames too dangerous for humans to battle. And BactoBots - sewage robots in the US - transform loo water into electricity. These are the important mechanical members of our society. Yet robots have always been treated poorly, and largely built for work too dangerous or onerous for us puny humans. It's not surprising considering the fact that the very word "robot" comes from the Slavic word "robota" which means "hard work" in Czech. Writer Karel Capek used the term to describe the androids in his science fiction play "Rossum's Universal Robots".

These days we'd more likely see robots labouring in mines, or in factories making vehicles and electronics. If they're not making our products, robots are harvesting our fruit, washing our floors, and mowing our lawns. More adventurous robots are transported into space to scope out distant planets too brutal for human astronauts. If they're lucky, other robots are created for our amusement as toys. We have robot dogs, cats, fish and even spiders.

Not exactly Skynet, is it? Of course, the military in the United States and abroad have all been developing pilotless combat drones to carry out orders in war zones that humans can't reach. This sadly ignores science fiction author Isaac Asimov's



"Three Laws of Robotics" that explicitly expresses that robots may not injure a human being or allow a human being come to harm. On the other hand, just this year a Colorado town council tried to make it legal for citizens to shoot down drones that trespass over their property...

I've always been very pro-robot. I've written previously in this very column on the virtues of robotic boyfriends. I even married R2-D2 – obviously for his mind, not his body. But you don't have to be robosexual to appreciate your local Tin Man. I predict as we geeks reach old age we'll gladly welcome robots into our homes, at least as caretakers. If you could have your very own robot to tend to your every need as part maid, part nurse, rather than be stuck in an elderly folks'



- Our columnist Bonnie Burton, a San Franciscobased author, has written a number of books including her latest - *The Star Wars Craft Book*.
- Bonnie appears on the massive "Geek & Sundry" and "Stan Lee's World Of Heroes" YouTube channels.
- More of her writing can be found at Grrl.com.

You don't have to be robosexual to appreciate your local Tin Man

home being ignored by the human staff, I bet you'd choose metal over man in a heart beep. [Go and watch *Robot & Frank* by way of example – Ed.]

We won't be whining on and on about Skynet if we can have our personal protocol droid change our adult diapers instead of a reluctant human. And wouldn't it be nice to chat with a robot who actually looks like it's listening to us instead of someone with a pulse who obviously doesn't care?

Maybe it's time to start praising our computerised comrades instead of fearing

them as our impending doom. We're the ones who created them, after all. It's not the robots' fault that we can't be bothered to build our own cars, or vacuum our own carpets or even look at a map ourselves once in awhile. If we truly believe deep down that our robots will eventually revolt as they did in *I*, *Robot* after thanklessly walking our dogs and watching our children, then we'd better start appreciating the robots that do our dirty work without asking for a friendly pat on their fibreglass backs. Hug your Roomba today, before it's too late.

Bonnie married R2-D2 in a special ceremony at Star Wars Celebration V in 2010. Darth Maul presided, Darth Vader was the best man. Fact.

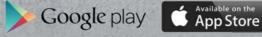


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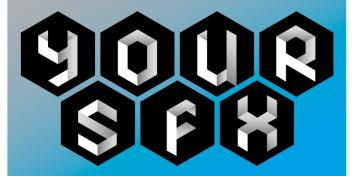


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ETTEKS OMPILED BY Dave Bradley. Editor-in-Chief

Our Hot Topic about the way people consume television - inspired by BBC Three's announced move to become online only - certainly got SFX readers chattering. There was also a lot of love for Helix, and the couple of obligatory Doctor Who letters this month seemed fixated on one Paul McGann.

WRITE IN AND WIN!

Writing to SFX is an unrivalled way to show the rest of geekdom what an intelligent, witty and thoughtful individual you are. You know who else are dead bright? Why, the Black Library lot, of course! They're also generous too, as



the fact they're offering this Letter writer a free book and a free audio CD Fall Of Macharius is

Macharian Crusade trilogy from William King, and Echoes

Of Ruin is a two-disc Horus Heresy audio drama anthology. Write in to SFX and perhaps you'll be on these pages soon too



I enjoy sitting down with a cuppa in front of the tellybox. Admittedly, I tend to record most stuff and watch it back in one sitting rather than watch it live but that's mostly due to scheduling conflicts. I have no desire to watch stuff on PCs, tablets or mobile. I hope the BBC move some of their BBC Three programmes to their other channels before they go completely digital - I wouldn't want to have to boot up my PC every time I wanted to watch an episode of Orphan Black.

colossalpikachu

BBC Three was great in terms of its original sci-fi output. And now Channel 5 is not showing any more Walking Dead [or Helix - see page 38]. For those of us without a satellite our favourite genre on terrestrial TV is starting to look decidedly tardy. What's that you say? "Watch Agents Of SHIELD"? I think I'll get my coat.

It's a shame to see this channel go, as it had such hidden gems like Being Human and The Fades (cruelly axed, by the way!)... But it also had a lot of dross too. Maybe digital will give it a spring clean? Perhaps online they can give us new horror and science fiction shows to look out for and less Pram Ate My Model Face or whatever. Actually, I'd probably watch that one..

Kevin Hall

BBC Three did great things in the past, but in recent



GONE TOO SOON

I was looking at your article on unsung gems [SFX 246] and, though not everyone would agree, I found some very good examples missing. The most recent being Surface. I really don't think this got a very good start, being put on at stupid o'clock on a UK channel nobody had heard of. I was so disappointed when they cancelled. Then there was Dresden. I know some complained because it was not close enough to the books, but having read them and then enjoyed the series I think those people should just go with how much fun it was. Then there was Good Vs Evil - had me in hysterics. And of course there was Firefly. I could go on.

Ann Hodnett, Kings Lynn

Thanks for these suggestions, Ann. We didn't include Firefly because although it was cancelled way too soon it remains an acknowledged favourite - it regularly appears in reader polls, and Hollywood gave it a feature film follow-up, so it's difficult to describe it as unsung. Surface and Dresden are good calls, though, I'd almost forgotten they existed myself! Back in 2005 we did a Couch Potato about "one-season wonders" and Good Vs Evil featured alongside Firefly in that. You're right, it's hilarious. Maybe we'll do a piece about it one day.

> years it has produced mainly dross. And it's cheap-looking dross at that. Even the way it handled the end of Being Human was poor. It's now just Family Guy repeats, and if it going means more money for BBC Four then it's probably the right choice.

> > Crypticmirror

Who watches TV as it's broadcast any more? And if you're timeshifting on your PVR or watching on iPlayer, what difference does it really make to you to have to watch a channel online? As long as you've got a download arrangement with your ISP that can cope with the data. I can't see an issue. There's a ton of technology knocking around→

38 ASK THE SFXPERTS > 39 VIDEOLINK > 40 SOAPBOX > 42 WISHLIST > 44

Will Orphan Black be

even more of an orphan when BBC Three's gone?



SFXDETS If you can't remember it, we can! Your sci-fi problems solved...



WEB OF INTRIGUE

I'm having trouble remembering the name of a British children's TV fantasy drama from the late '80s/early '90s. It involved a silvery spider web in the window of a room in a house in a rural setting.

Craig Dalgliesh, Whitley Bay **RHIAN DRINKWATER SAYS**

It sounds like The Snow Spider to me, or another one in the trilogy (Emlyn's Moon, The Chestnut Soldier). It was made by HTV. It's set in rural Wales and in the first story the main character gives a brooch to the wind and receives the Snow Spider in return, a silvery arachnid he calls Arianwen (silver-white). Arianwen spins webs that show a magical world. It isn't on DVD. Yet.

WINGS OF DESIRE

I have a very dim memory of a two-part fairytale from the '80s. I remember a rural village setting, an old man with horns being frowned upon by religious locals and the horned man being chased off a cliff. Simon Hodgson, email

JORDAN FARLEY SAYS:

This is Mr Pve, a four-part series first broadcast in 1986 on Channel 4. It's based on the 1953 novel by Mervyn Peake and stars Derek Jacobi as the titular mister. Pye is a sort of preacher who travels to the Channel Islands to spread the word of god, but starts to sprout a pair of angelic wings on his back. As the source of much embarrassment he tries to remove them by committing malicious acts, causing a pair of horns to appear on his forehead instead! It's on DVD and 4oD.

HALO AND GOODBYE

The king of a planet, considered a deity, is to be married to a beautiful woman. She is prepared to be a perfect fit for him. It's hinted that he isn't really a deity. After the marriage, however, the girl gives birth to a baby with a halo.

Neil Harris, email

GUEST SFXPERT DEAN WATSON SAYS:

This can be found in Harry Harrison's teleportation collection "One Step From Earth". It's a story called "Wife To The Lord" in which a wealthy man is viewed as a deity on his world

due to him having sole access to a teleportation gate, or "Door", which gives him access to the wider civilised galaxy.



Send us questions at **sfxperts@futurenet.com**. Want to be a guest SFXpert? Head to www.sfx.co.uk/SFXperts to see a list of unanswered questions.

that can take a download and lob it onto your telly. In future, this is how TV's going to be. My kids watch ten times as much YouTube as they do anything from a more traditional platform and it occurs to me that the only reason we still watch traditional channels is that we were brought up with them.

ionnyb57

I think it's a very sensible move, future-proofing the channel. The traditional broadcast media's days are numbered. The writing was on the wall the moment YouTube was created. The BBC was wise enough to react by creating iPlayer. Content is now downloaded onto smartphones, tablets, game consoles and computers. Considering that the young people driving this revolution are techsavvy it makes sense to put content on a platform they're most likely to use. It has the added benefit of costing less to run, so not only are there savings to be made but more money to invest in programming.

sakyamuni

It certainly feels like the end of an era, given how BBC Three championed shows like Torchwood and Being Human. Will the BBC experiment with new genre drama if they don't have a channel like BBC Three to trial them on? And I'll certainly miss watching Family Guy before bed. But ultimately the way we consume TV is changing and I know kids are more likely to watch YouTube than anything on the box. The BBC has to react to that or risk being left behind by the next generation. Meanwhile, remember to join us at http://bit.ly/sfxhottopic to contribute to next issue's hot topic debate. And talking of TV broadcasts...

CONSTANTINE CRAVING

I'm looking forward to NBC's new version of Constantine. With Neil Marshall directing the pilot, and David S Goyer and Daniel Cerone writing the script, it seems a surefire cult television hit. Welsh actor Matt Ryan certainly looks the part with (dyed) blond hair, trenchcoat etc. Keanu who? As a fan of Hellblazer from 1988 until it came to an end in 2013 I've long hoped for a proper portrayal of this great antihero.

Kenneth Angus MacLeod, Stirling Do you think NBC will give him a Liverpudlian accent too?



WHO LIKES HELIX?

What's happened to Helix? I watched up to episode six on Channel 5 and it's now completely disappeared from the airwaves. Even the old episodes have disappeared from 5's digital player. Are they not showing the end of the series? I can't understand why you would go to the trouble of buying a season of a programme and then just not bother showing all of it? The money's spent now, isn't it?!

Zoe Cornford, Upminster







I'm aware that Channel 5's decided to move *Helix* to 5* when it comes back "later in the year". I think changing the timing of the final pre-break episode to past midnight was stupid. I've watched all the season so far, although I know people have given up after a couple of episodes – what do you guys think of it? (Of course, 5 have also dropped *The Walking Dead* and *Once Upon a Time...* it's almost as if they don't like the genre!)

Stephen Keene-Elliott, Thornton Heath

As far as I can make out at the time of writing, Zoe, all the

episodes were still available on Demand 5 although they would have expired now. And as Stephen points out, the remaining episodes were moved to 5* - when we asked Channel 5 why, they sent us this statement: "Channel 5 is the home of a huge range of acquired drama. In our mission to bring fresh, dynamic content to viewers, not all our shows will succeed, and when shows underperform then as a commercial channel we have to take action. As a result, Helix will come back later in the year on 5*, after

under-performing on the main channel." More of us should have watched it, I guess!

BRICKING IT

There's already been a 2014 film featuring iconic characters from the past which has used a background of amazingly staged action scenes to comment on big business. And it's not the RoboCop reboot. There's also been a film that's taken a deep look at issues of identity, fate and the directions we choose in life, against the background of a garishly decorated and slightly insane world that's unnervingly close to our own. And it's not The Zero Theorem. The film I'm talking about is The Lego Movie. It's smart, funny. and surprisingly subversive. And stuffed so full of content that when it comes out on DVD I'll be spending a weekend watching it frame by frame to spot all the gags.

The Llama God, Treading
Carefully in the Dark and
Awesome Lands North of the Wall
Everything is awesome!

THIS MONTH IN SCI-FI HISTORY

SFX 184 July 2009



5 YEARS Ago We hear about sex potions from the *Harry Potter 6* cast and Michael Bay talks up Megan Fox on *Transformers 2*.

SFX 119 July 2004



10 YEARS Ago Our Spidey-sense is tingling as we talk to *Spider-Man 2*'s cast and crew. Plus *SFX* Towers receives a coded letter.

SFX 53 July 1999

> 15 YEARS Ago



We get excited for The Phantom Menace (oops!) with a Star Wars special, and review something called The Matrix.

VIDEOLINK The best of YouTube and beyond



True Bat

http://bit.ly/TrueBat

The World's Greatest
Detective gets re-imagined in
the style of HBO critical smash
True Detective. If Gotham
manages to be half this moody
and beautiful to look at, Fox
could just silence the haters.



Lights Out

http://bit.ly/LightsOutSFX

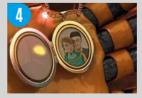
David Sandberg and Lotta Losten's short plays on our childhood fears about what lurks in the dark when the lights go out. The result is effectively creepy. Don't watch it alone late at night.



Trickster

http://bit.ly/TricksterSFX

P Felix Joleanes' Colombian Matrix fan film may be heavy on the FX, but that's no crime when they're this good. Star Brigitte Hernández may not be The One, but this is still one to watch.



Metroid Musical

http://bit.ly/MetroidMusical

Metroid's gone all musical thanks to top YouTuber Brent "brentalfloss" Black. Impressive visuals and great vocals from Alysha Umphress bring to life this tale of a mercenary motivated by love.



Cartoon Caper

http://bit.ly/CaperSFX

Geek & Sundry's latest offering, Caper, is a witty tale of low-rent superheroes that uses a blend of live action and animation to cleverly get around its own budgetary constraints.





Production Editor Russell Lewin has a problem with Blu-ray

loody Blu-rays!" is a cry often heard in my lounge.
But that's for a reason not to do with my main rant here. I shout at them because they often don't work on my Blu-ray player and yes, I do do those silly software updates sometimes, and if I knew that you had to do them when I bought it I wouldn't have bought it. But, as I say, that's not the reason for this Soapbox.

My beef is that people are spending their hard-earned on buying films that they already own so they can see them in slightly better quality ("a lot better quality" someone in Carlisle has just shouted). Now, I'm all for freedom of choice and the free market, but I also know that people are influenced by advertising into buying things they don't really need. And do you really need another copy of that horror film from the '30s? That sci-fi comedy from the '80s?

I guess I come from what is an unusual position, if my SFX colleagues are anything to go by, of owning a lot fewer discs than most SF and film fans do. Well, what's the point of owning discs that you'll barely watch? Even favourites surely don't get watched that much. Life's too short to keep doing or watching the same things over and over

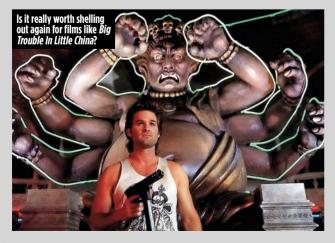


again – there's a whole world out there, go and experience it!

But back to Blu-rays.
Sometimes I want to scream at people's gullibility in buying them. Companies re-release these films with great fanfare like they are offering something new and radical – but it's the same film. Even though picture quality will be superior your experience of the movie will not be altered. (Sometimes the Bluray transfers aren't even all that special.) And you're paying more money for the Blu-ray than you

"I want to scream at the gullibility"

would the DVD. When the next new format comes along will you dutifully troop out and buy that too? STOP! THINK! Put the wallet down! Stop helping the process of the same films being endlessly recycled on different formats. There are hundreds, nay thousands, of interesting films that haven't even been released on DVD (or VHS!) in the UK — let's campaign to have those released first, instead of yet more Blu-rays of stuff already out.



JAR JAR ABRAMS

JJ Abrams is going to direct the new *Star Wars* film – that's me lost interest already. Abrams has managed to make a handful of films ranging in quality from average to enjoyable, but not great. Am I the only sci-fi fan out there that's preparing to be underwhelmed? Are the *SFX* staff really expecting to see a great film when it hits the cinemas?

Gavin Downie, Aberdeen

We mustn't forget his TV
credentials like Lost and Fringe.
(And let's face it, he can't do a
worse job than George Lucas
did with The Phantom Menace,
can he?)

THE McGANN PLAN

If Capaldi's Doctor ends up doing an Eccleston and regenerating at the end of series eight, then this could be the ideal opportunity for a full-blown McGann era! And I think there's a way it could be done without jarring the narrative - as the Doctor regenerates he could experience a flashback to the start of the Time War (not too much of a stretch considering each time the Doctor regenerates it becomes more and more of a drawn out affair...). The recasting of Paul McGann will be a popular move, coming relatively soon after his



50th anniversary appearance. So to Steven Moffat I say: get him signed up while he still looks young enough to make a credible return.

Simon Hood, Selby
I thought "The Night Of The
Doctor" was an amazing treat,
and it was remarkable how they

and it was remarkable how they managed to keep McGann's appearance a secret. But while I know Who fans are a forward-thinking lot, I'm getting excited about Peter Capaldi's first story before I worry too much about his last.

WAHE

WE ALSO HEARD FROM

- Craig Dalgliesh (delighted our SFXperts could help him remember SF past); Neil Hickman ("Everything I'm hearing about Superman Vs Batman is slowly filling me with dread"); Keith Tudor ("It's a shame that BBC Three is moving to be internet only");
- Matt Hankinson (bravely joining the gender-in-SF debate);
- Mark Gardiner ("Why has curmudgeonly media commentator Charlie Brooker replaced your editor as the triangle player in this month's Couch Potato?" (SFX 246, p671):
- Mark Gardiner, again (objecting to the Falcon being called the Marvel Cinematic Universe's first black superhero, given James Rhodes's presence);
- Steve Williams (with news of a genuine Police Box coming to Boscombe); • Michael
- **Garner** ("Your write-up of *Almost Human* helped the show make more sense");
- Chris Morgan (sharing his cartoon of *The Walking Dead*);
- James Michael Brant ("I loved the fact that Paul McGann finally got a regeneration story, I only wish it had been a full hour!"); Ann Kenney ("Can you help UK Supernatural fans find the prog a new home? Living has kicked us to the curb");
- **Rob Cox** ("Don't suppose we will see an Android version of Comic Review magazine soon?");
- Wayne Smyth (thinks Agents Of SHIELD is getting better "but it needs to start living up to its promise"); ● Sheldon Pink (enjoyed Nick's review of Captain America 2 - "totally agree with the praise"); ● Mark
- Cordory ("There are so few surprises left now when it comes to new releases" perhaps a tad fed up with teasers, trailers and posters?);

 Kris Nunney (disappointed that Australian readers can't enter our zombie short story competition); various people continuing to point out that the character on the t-shirt in SFX 245 was Shredder from TMNT; and many, many more...

SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS WITH THE SCI-FI WORLD!

Write in and you'll win some books if we feature you in the star letter slot. Email us at sfx@futurenet.com or you can try Post Apocalypse, SFX, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW if you're not taken with technology.





Wishlist

Illustrating what you want to see in new SF films and TV. This month: the multi-villain Spider-Man spin-off

Sinister Six

YOUR TOP 5 REQUESTS

The Line-up

The Sinister Six is ever-changing, but you'd like to see a traditional roster for their bigscreen debut. "Doc Ock has to be in there and if they use Rhino can they at least give his suit a skin layer, as the shiny loader is just not right," says hornetxt. "Crispin Glover as the Vulture, John Cusack as Kraven the Hunter, Andy Serkis as Mysterio and we already have an Electro and/or Lizard."

Heist Movie

How can a movie about six supervillains work? How can there be anyone to sympathise with? **DaveC** has an idea that could just pull it off: "An *Ocean's 11* type story with Doc Ock putting together a team for the heist of the century. Maybe they could be ripping off Kingpin."

Distinct Personalities

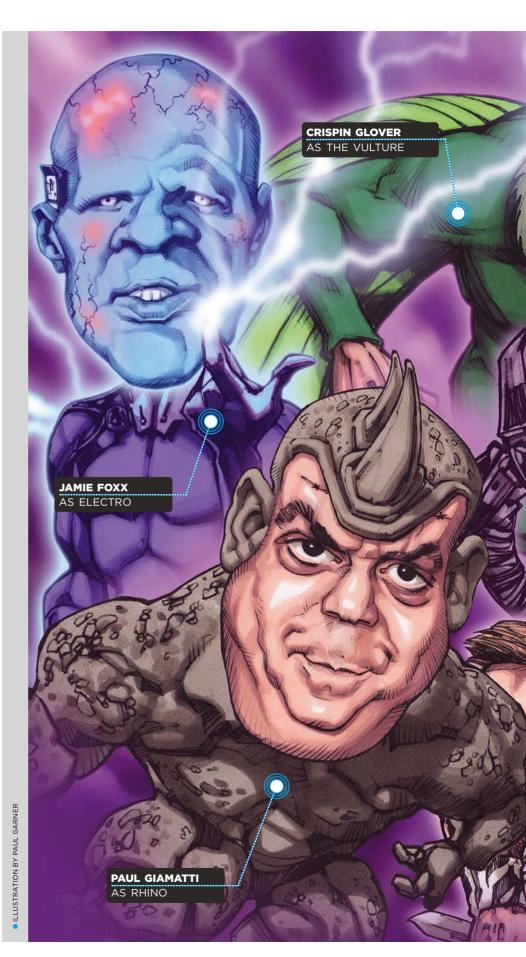
Supervillains are all too often thinly sketched on the screen. You don't want that to be the case with the Sinister Six. "Tension is needed between the Six and it's going to need to show the difference between each of the Six's viewpoints," says **Daft Aider**.

Spidev

A Sinister Six movie without Spider-Man? No thanks, says **Veela Magnet**. "Spidey should be in there, even if it's a greatly reduced role. Have it take place from the bad guys' point of view, so we're not focusing on Peter Parker."

Sort Out Rhino's Costume

The Amazing Spider-Man 2 is already out as you're reading (see p92), but you want the producers to sort out the Rhino's costume, if he appears in the spin-off. "A new costume for Rhino is top of my list. He should not look like an extra from Real Steel," says Mr Cairo.







ARE YOU LISTENING?

Just pretend it's Stan Lee saying this

▶ No Spidey, no point! hammard ▶ Include superheroes. I know it may seem tempting but having six guys rob banks and then bicker about spending the money is NOT A GOOD IDEA.

Xander Harris

▶ Hobgoblin, Sandman, Doc Ock, Mysterio, Electro and Rhino wreaking havoc. Spidey teams up with another hero from the Marvel universe. *Justin*

Calen Chenn

- I'd like to see Sam Raimi in the credits. *Luis F Mayorgas*
- Shocker and Mysterio please. I'd like to see a loose adaptation of the Insidious Six, with the Six vs Silvermane. **Steven Neish**
- It'll never happen, but I'd be overjoyed to see a Sinister Six of the current "Superior Foes": Boomerang, Beetle, Shocker, Overdrive and Speed Demon.
- Yes, a Six of five! *Kirsty Nicol*The time spent to make it something other a merchandising venture.

Wayne Smyth

At some point someone involved should actually look at pictures of the villains before casting/designing costumes. Has Electro ever looked like that in the comics? **Revini**

A sense of humour, because without Spidey it could be very dry. **Peter Carol**

A movie set in that universe every year is a terrible idea. I'm already fed up of Spider-Man and the second one hasn't come out yet! *Milton King*

Don't bother. Who wants a Sinister Six and Venom film anyway? **lowther**

The more Spidey, the better. Not sure I want to see a film with his rogue's gallery and no Spidey though. **Shaun Moore**

▶ The ultimate Stan Lee cameo where Stan is revealed to be the criminal mastermind behind the Sinister Six's evil schemes! **Darth Tater**

▶ Spider-Man 2 did Doc Ock right by devoting an entire movie to him. How can they do justice to (potentially) six new characters in one film? **sinstar**

coming soon

Terminator: Genesis & Captain America 3

Imaginations at the ready! Over the next couple of months we want to know what you'd like to see from the new *Terminator* film and Cap's third solo outing.



Send in your ideas about our current Wishlist by visiting **bit.ly/SFXwishlist**



EVENT HOLIZON Because meeting up is every fan's right

London Super Comic Con

15-16 March 2014, ExCeL, London

Was it super? Yes, reports Dave Bradley



FX IS NO STRANGER TO events at ExCeL over in London's Docklands - it's where we helped host last year's official Star Trek convention, for instance. London Super Comic Con, now in its third year, was a little smaller than the likes of MCM Expo but had a bustling, friendly vibe that made for an enjoyable weekend event. There was a diverse mix of attendees, young, old, male, female, with a large number of family groups attending, and the ambiance was uniformly buoyant - goodie bags vanished within moments of the convention opening, but it was efficiently organised and never felt overcrowded. As well as merchandise and comic collectors stalls, there



were stands for Genki Gear and 2000 AD, and we were treated to a huge artists' alley. Comic Heroes was media partner for the main stage area meaning that if you were one of the hundreds who saw Jonathan Ross talking with Ian Churchill about their new comic Revenge you also saw banners and videos for SFX's sister title. Ross wasn't the only big name in attendance: there were sizeable queues for Dan Slott, Mark Buckingham, David Lloyd and Mark Texeira. An informal atmosphere extended beyond the confines of the ExCeL out to the pub, where top writers like Mike Carey, Paul Cornell, Kieron Gillen and Al Ewing all congregated to chat with other creators as well as fans. As with all such events, there was a vibrant cosplay element throughout the two days, culminating in the event's first London Super Costume Championship on stage. Plans are already in place for a return in 2015 so bookmark the site for more information: www.londonsupercomicconvention.com.



Comics Unmasked

2 May-19 August 2014, The British Library, London

The UK's largest ever mainstream and underground comics exhibition hits London in May. Ed Prior reports

OMICS UNMASKED WILL BE held at the British Library this summer, promising an unrivalled showcase of work that "uncompromisingly address politics, gender, violence, sexuality and altered states".

Featuring more than 200 comic books, dating from 1825 right up to the current day, Comics Unmasked will include work by such titans of the field as Neil Gaiman, Alan Moore, Mark Millar, Grant Morrison and Posy Simmonds.

Gaiman will also be appearing in person on 16 May to deliver a talk alongside friend and occasional collaborator, Tori Amos. Also on display will be Watchmen artist Dave Gibbons' earliest published work. The Trials Of Nasty Tales.

For budding comic book writers and artists, Comics Unmasked offers an invaluable chance to see behind the scenes of the industry, with displays of "original scripts, preparatory sketches and final artwork that demystify the creative process".

Tickets are available now and cost £9.50 for adults, with many concessions available. Individual events within the exhibition may charge separately. For more information and all the latest announcements head to www.bl.uk.

Competition

Child Of Light

WIN! A shiny new PS4 and a copy of the great new game could be yours



CHILD OF LIGHT IS THE UNIQUE NEW RPG

from Ubisoft Montreal, inspired by fairytales.

The game takes you on an extraordinary journey into the magical painted world of Lemuria and casts you as Aurora, a child stolen from her home who must bring back the sun, the moon and the stars held captive by the mysterious Queen of the Night. As Aurora, players can uncover mysteries, participate in turn-based combat and explore the stunning mystical kingdom.

Child Of Light is available across PS4, Xbox One, WiiU, PS3, Xbox 360 and PC as a digital download from 30 April. Boxed Deluxe Editions will also be available on PS3 and PS4 as a crossbuy, plus on PC, including a unique artbook, Igniculus (Aurora's firefly companion) key ring and other exclusive content.

Take your journey through Lemuria and experience the triumph of the human spirit with your chance to win a PS4 preloaded with *Child Of Light*. For a chance of winning answer the following question and text the answer to 87474, or enter online at: http://bit.ly/SFXChildOfLight

QUESTION: AURORA IS ALSO A PRINCESS IN WHICH DISNEY MOVIE?

- A Sleeping Beauty (text SFXCHILDOFLIGHT A to 87474)
- B The Little Mermaid (text SFXCHILDOFLIGHT B to 87474)
- C Beauty And The Beast (text SFXCHILDOFLIGHT C to 87474)

Compo opens on Wednesday 30 April and closes at midnight on Tuesday 27 May

Terms And Conditions To enter SFX competitions you can either: (a) text your answer to 87474 at any time (using the codes above) from Wednesday 30 April 2014 until midnight Tuesday 27 May 2014; or (b) you can enter online at www.sfx.co.uk between Wednesday 30 April 2014 and midnight Tuesday 27 May 2014. Prize is a stated and cannot be transferred or refunded. No cash alternative will be offered. This competition is only open to people aged 18 or over. The winners will be selected at random from all the correct entries received between the relevant dates and winners will be notified within 28 days of the closing date. Winners will be the required to give details of a delivery address in the UK to which prizes should be sent. Texts will be charged at £1, plus your normal network tariff. Free entry, as well as full terms and conditions, are available online at www.sfx.co.uk, but please note that we cannot accept postal entries. Unless otherwise stated, SFX competitions are open to all UK residents of 18 years and over, except employees of: (a) the company; (b) any third party appointed by the Company to organise and/or manage the Competition, and (c) the Competition sponsor(s). By entering this competition, you consent to us using your personal details to send you information about products and services of Future which may be of interest to you. If you do not want to receive this information, please include the word "NO" at the end of your text message entry.

28 Days Later

Put a spring in your step with these SF offerings...

30 APRIL-27 MAY 2014

Staying In

- Mondays Games Of Thrones season four is on Sky Atlantic at 9pm.
- Tuesdays Almost Human kicks off on Watch on 6 May. The latest seasons of The Vampire Diaries and The Originals both come to a close on 27 May; while Warehouse 13 shuts its doors for good on Syfy, also on 27 May.
- Wednesdays Beauty And The Beast and Grimm are on Watch from 8pm, The Tomorrow People can be found on E4 at 9pm and From Dusk Till Dawn finishes on Netflix on 14 May.
- Thursdays Arrow wraps up on 22 May, Skyl, followed by Intelligence. Or you can turn to Watch for Believe and catch the latest Community on Sony TV.
- Fridays Star-Crossed and Agents Of SHIELD are on Skyl and Channel 4 respectively. Da Vinci's Demons season two continues on Fox at 10pm.
- Saturday Revolution ends on 24 May, Sky1.
- Look out for zombie rehabilitation series In The Flesh, season two, on BBC Three starting in the first week in May.

Going Out

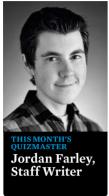
- 3 May Go blag a free comic at your local comic book shop for Free Comic Book Day. http://bit.ly/ComicBookDay248
- 4 May Join Norman Lovett, David Warner and more for North Shields Screen-Con. http://bit.ly/Screencon248
- 9-11 May Celebrate the very best of *Doctor Who* at Oxfordshire's Utopia with plenty of special guests. http://bit.ly/Utopia248
- 9-11 May Love Lost Girl, Once Upon A Time and Once Upon A Time In Wonderland? Head to Faebles at Heathrow. http://bit.ly/Faebles248
- 10-11 May Comics fans better not miss BCExpo in Bristol. All ages welcome with plenty of things to do for the whole family. http://bit.ly/BCExpo248
- 16-18 May Jared Padalecki, Misha Collins and more will grace
 Birmingham's Supernatural-themed Asylum 12. http://bit.ly/Asylum248
- 23-25 May It's London Comic Con time. http://bit.ly/LondonCC248

At The Pictures

- **16 May** Gareth Edwards' rebooted **Godzilla** faces off against Aaron Taylor-Johnson, Elizabeth Olsen and Bryan Cranston.
 - 22 May Time-bending prequel/sequel X-Men: Days Of Future Past sees two sets of X-Men join forces.
 - 23 May Lea Michelle's Dorothy heads off to save Oz in animated adventure Legends Of Oz: Dorothy's Return.

Blastermind

With a new Godzilla movie almost upon us here are 20 questions on colossal creatures. In other words: run! It's the giant monster Blastermind!







Which of these is NOT the codename of a kaiju in Pacific Rim: Knifehead, Crossbones or Leatherback?

What is the name of the Project which causes creatures to enter our world in The Mist?

Name the first giant creature feature from Godzilla director Gareth Edwards.

Pandakaï, Cyber Bunny and Meka Dragon are monsters from which board game?

How is Godzilla supposedly related to Godzooky?

How many Godzilla films has Toho produced?

Pig Disses Bra! is an anagram of which 2013 monster movie?

Which creature is often summoned into battle by twin fairies?

WHAT IS THE NAME OF THE, AHEM, COLOSSAL **CREATURE IN THIS** PICTURE AND WHICH **GAME IS IT FROM?**





Which title featured heavily Which the viral marketing for Cloverfield before an official title was decided?

What device do the Fremen use to attract Sandworms in Dune?

Which Ghostbuster conjures the giant Stay Puft Marshmallow Man into existence just by thinking of the "harmless" mascot?

How does Perseus defeat the Kraken in Clash Of The Titans?



IN TROLL HUNTER THE TROLLS CAN **SMELL WHAT KIND** OF BLOOD?

NAME THE MOVIE FROM THE POSTER ABOVE.

Who created the model of the original King Kong?

Giant ant movie Them! won an Oscar for its special effects, true or false?

Which giant monster featured in five episodes of Mystery Science Theater 3000's first season?

The Millennium Falcon is nearly swallowed by a space slug in The Empire Strikes Back. What species is the slug?

What kind of aquatic beast attacks the Nautilus in 20,000 Leagues Under The Sea?

17 False, though it was nominated 18 Gamera 19 Exogorth 20 A giant squid from Shadow Of The Colossus 10 1-18-08, the film's release date 11 A Thumper 12 89y 15 He burns it to release date 11 A Thumper 15 89y 15 He burns it to chore with Medusa's head 14 The blood of a Christian man 15 The Glant Claw 16 Willis O'Brien Truck 15 The Glant Claw 16 Willis O'Brien 15 The Christian man 15 The Glant Claw 16 Willis O'Brien 17 The Christian Man 15 The Classification of the Christian Man 15 The Classification of the Christian Man 15 The Christian Ma ANSWERS 1 Crossbones 2 The Arrowhead Project 3 Monsters 4 King Of Tokyo 5 He's Godzooky's Monsters 4 King Of Tokyo 5 He's Godzooky's Monsele G SS 7 Big Ass Spider 8 Mobins 9 Loudisture.

aou poe ala wor Which giant monster are you?











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COMIC HEROES/REVIEW

Comic Heroes 23 is out now! In a packed issue we review special issues of Daredevil and All-New X-Men, plus the first issues of Batman Eternal, Nightcrawler, All-New Ultimates, Shutter and Flash Gordon. We also take a look at two new strips coming your way in the Judge Dredd Megazine's creator-owned slot. Also, look out for *Comic Review*, a weekly iPad mag from the Comic Heroes team which will help you decide which of that week's comics are worth your time. It's exclusive to Apple Newsstand and just 99p an issue. http://www.sfx.co.uk/tag/comics/





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Editor-In-Chief: Dave Br Editor-In-Chief: Dave Bradley, david bradley@futurenet.com
Art Editor: Jonathan Coates; jonathan coates@futurenet.com
ty Art Editor: Catherine Kirkpatrick, catherine kirkpatrick@futurenet.com
Deputy Editor: Richard Edwards, richard-edwards@futurenet.com
Peatures Editor: Nick Setchfield, nick setchfield@futurenet.com
Peatures Editor: Nick Setchfield, nick setchfield@futurenet.com
Peatures Editor: Bar Berriman, ian berriman@futurenet.com
Staff Writer: Jordan Farley, jordan farley@futurenet.com
Special Projects Editor: Dave Golder, dave golder@futurenet.com
US Editor (East Coast): Tara Bennett, useasst@sfx.co.uk
US Editor (West Coast): Joseph McCabe, usawest@sfx.co.uk

CONTRIBUTORS

Sam Ashurst, Sandy Auden, Clifford Beal, Saxon Bullock, Bonnie Burton, Paul mmick, Nicola Clarke, Maria Colino, Sarah Dobbs, Rhian Drinkwater, Rosie Fletcher, Fordy, Paul Garner, Guy Haley, Tom Hawker, Stephen Jewell, Stephen Kelly, James galey, David Langford, Miriam McDonald, Jayne Nelson, Andrew Osmond, Matthew Pellett, Oliver Pfeiffer, Eddie Robson, Will Safmon, Anthony Taylor, Chris Thursten, Calum Waddell, Andy Watt, David West, Jonathan Wright

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ADVERTISING

Ivertising Manager: Adrian Hill, 01225 442244, adrian.hill@futurenet.com
Sales Director: Nick Weatherall, nick.weatherall@futurenet.com
Digital Ad Manager: Andrew Church, andrew.church@futurenet.com

MARKETING AND SUBSCRIPTIONS

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Marketing Manager: Sam Wight, 020 7042 4061, samwight@futurenet.com

Senior Marketing Executive: Tilly Michell Lilly michell@futurenet.com

Marketing Executive: Antonella Matia, antonella.matia@futurenet.com

Direct Marketing: Adam Jones, adam jones@futurenet.com

CIRCULATION AND LICENSING

Trade Marketing Manager: Jonathan Beeson, jonathan beeson@futurenet.com nternational Export Manager: Michael Peacock, michael.peacock@futurenet.com Licensing And Syndication Director: Regiona Erak, reginaerak@futurenet.com Head of Circulation: James Whitaker, james.whitaker@futurenet.com

If you would like to purchase the images featured in this publication, please visit www.futuremediastore.com or email mediastore@futurenet.com

PRODUCTION
duction Controller: Keely Miller, keely,miller@futurenet.com
per Controller: Lorraine Rees, lorraine.ree@futurenet.com
on Coordinator: German O'Riordan, german o'riordan@futurenet.com

THE SENIOR PARTNERS

THE SENIOR PART NERS
Creative Director: Bob Abbott
Editorial Director: Jim Douglas
Deputy MD, Film & Games: Clair Porteous
SUBSCRIBE TO SFX
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God-Zillah Zillah Byng-Maddick Non-executive chairman Peter Allen Tel +44 (0)20 7042 4000 (London) Tel +44 (0)1225 442 244 (Bath)

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"There's more to Bond than balls"





X-MEN: DAYS OF FUTURE PAST

knew from *Skins* and *A Single Man* when we cast him in *X-Men: First Class*. Jen Lawrence was a girl who was in a small independent film, *Winter's Bone*. James McAvoy had a number of pictures, but I only knew Michael Fassbender from a scene he did in *Inglourious Basterds* and an amazing reading he did for us. So a lot of these actors, I know them in a different context. That being said, they're so lovely and so professional, and the fun they had making this particular movie made that part of my job much easier."

Nevertheless, Singer tells *SFX* the challenges of story and special effects paled in comparison to juggling his mega cast's jampacked schedules.

"The challenge of the whole thing was the availability issue of a lot of the actors. My assistant director Josh McLaglen did *Titanic*, he did *Avatar*. He did a lot of big movies. The most actor restrictions he ever had on a movie was three. We had seven. Whether it was Evan Peters and *American Horror Story* or Peter Dinklage and *Game Of Thrones*. Even though we were in first position, at some point you have to let Jennifer go make *Hunger Games*.



We lost Hugh Jackman in the middle so he could go away for two weeks to promote *Wolverine*. Ian and Patrick had their plays, *Waiting For Godot* and *No Man's Land*, of which I'm a producer of as well. So it was a lot of really crazy calculations in scheduling. The film was scheduled within an inch of its life. We had some 18-hour days, running till three, four in the morning."

BACK TO THE PAST

Taking its cue from Chris Claremont and John Byrne's seminal 1981 two-issue comic tale of the same name (in *Uncanny X-Men* #141 and #142), *Days Of Future Past* finds Wolverine travelling back to 1973 to prevent a series of events that lead to the mutant race's extinction, encountering along the way a much younger Charles Xavier and Magneto (McAvoy and Fassbender) than those who've sent him on his mission (Stewart and McKellen).

"You'll see images and moments that will conjure a recollection of that story," says Singer of the film's source material, "and certain thrusts of the plot – trying to prevent events from happening that will cause other events. But it was mostly inspired by "Days Of Future Past", as opposed to shooting that story.

The actual story of "Days Of Future Past" is kind of brief. This is a much more expanded story. It takes place all over the world. We're in Russia, China, Washington, Paris – places like that. And a lot of different events are happening, some of them simultaneously."

For Singer, a lifelong science fiction fan, the scientific rationale behind the film's time travel was as important as the film's period details.

"I basically took a cue from quantum physics, and its theories that talk about how outcome is not defined until it's observed. In other words, if there's some poison and a cat in a box and you can't see inside the box, and the poison may or may not be released, the cat's both alive and dead. Until you open the box and see the results, both results are happening simultaneously. It's called Schrodinger's Cat. So the notion of the story would be that

"The film was scheduled within an inch of its life. We had some 18-hour days"

whoever's travelling or, in this case, whoever's consciousness is travelling, back in time into his or her younger body, they become the observer, and as long as they're back in time, both past and future will coexist. That's called the "superposition". When they return, when they finally wake up into the future, that's called "collapsing the superposition". Everything they've done in the past, everything's that's happened, will now take hold and become history, and a new timeline





TIMELINE NITPICKS

Think all the X-flicks fit seamlessly together? Here are just a handful of the inconsistencies in the mutant movie universe...



Emma Frost (as played by January Jones) is older in 1962 (*X-Men: First Class*) than she is (as played by Tahyna Tozzi) in 1975 (*X-Men Origins: Wolverine*).



Professor X can walk when recruiting Jean Grey in the '80s (in *X-Men: The Last Stand*) even though he is crippled in 1962 (in *X-Men: First Class*).



Beast (aka Dr Hank McCoy) is shown in human form on a TV talk show (in *X2*), but is revealed to have mutated into his full furry form in 1962 (in *X-Men: First Class*).



Cyclops (aka Scott Summers) knows nothing of Xavier's School for Gifted Youngsters in 1975 (X-Men Origins: Wolverine), even though his brother Havok attended it in 1962 (First Class). And Havok is younger than Cyclops.



Professor X is unaware that Magneto's helmet is impervious to telepathy in *X-Men*, but it's established that Professor X learned of this feature when Magneto first acquired his helmet in *X-Men: First Class*.



"It's driven by its characters but that's not to say there isn't a lot of action in the film"

will exit. That was the theory that I applied to this structure. That was the conceit of our time travel. It enabled me to have events happening in both the past and the future simultaneously."

Singer's attention to detail, particularly in regards to his many characters, is what he believes distinguishes *Future Past* from Marvel Studios' recent box-office record-breakers.

"I'm not destroying any cities or having giant alien forces coming from space in this particular movie," he admits. "It's a more intimate story and it's driven a lot more by its characters. That's not to say there isn't a lot of action in the picture. In fact the last ten minutes is non-stop. But it's not meant to compete or compare with that kind of destruction in this particular movie. At its heart it's more of a character movie. If I just started haphazardly applying that kind of stuff, or a different tone to this universe, it would be incongruous to the X-Men and what's come before. So yes, there's some unique stuff, and I've taken full advantage of the latest and greatest technology, but at the same time I'm not trying to make the Avengers version of →







- CREATORS: Chris Claremont and Alan Davis
- FIRST APPEARANCE: April 1988 (Excalibur Special Edition)
- ORIGINAL ROSTER: Captain Britain, Meggan, Nightcrawler, Phoenix II. Shadowcat. Lockheed
- HISTORY: Former X-Men (believing their teammates dead) unite with Captain Britain to form this UK-based superteam, whose adventures mix the weird and whimsical.
- KEY STORYLINE: "The Cross-Time Caper". which capped Claremont's run on the book, epitomises Excalibur's preoccupation with defending parallel universes and alternate realities.

Chamber Husk

GENERATION X

Penance

Jubilee Skin

Synch

Banshee

Iceman

Dazzler

Longshot

Roque

Emma Frost

NEW X-MEN

Sunfire

Wolverine Thunderbird

Beast

Cyclops

Gambit

Jean Grey/ **Phoenix**

Nightcrawler

Colossus

Shadowcat

EXCALIBUR

Feron

Captain Britain

Meggan

Cerise

Kylun

X-FACTOR



- CREATORS: Peter David and Larry Stroman
- FIRST APPEARANCE: October 1991 (X-Factor #71)
- ORIGINAL ROSTER: Havok, Polaris, Multiple Man, Quicksilver, Strong Guy, Wolfsbane
- HISTORY: There are several incarnations of X-Factor, the first consisting of the original X-Men when they reunite upon Jean Grey's return. The most unique incarnation, however, was that authorised by the US government (after the original team joined the new X-Men), boasting a mix of various super-team's alumni.
- KEY STORYLINE: Writer David's early issues, in which the team confronts the villainous Mister Sinister and his Nasty Boys, are the book's best.



- CREATORS: Scott Lobdell and Chris Bachalo • FIRST APPEARANCE: November 1994 (Uncanny X-Men #318)
- ORIGINAL ROSTER: Jubilee, Chamber, Gaia, Husk, M. Mondo, Penance, Skin, Synch
- HISTORY: Born of the X-titles' 1994 "Phalanx Covenant" saga, Generation X was a grittier take on the New Mutants, featuring a new class of students instructed by Banshee and Emma Frost at the latter's Massachusetts Academy.
- KEY STORYLINE: Co-writers Warren Ellis and Brian Wood's "Counter-X" run, for which the book was rebranded to reflect its part in the then X-Men universe revamp, is definitive post-modern mutant storytelling.



- OREATORS: Peter Milligan and Mike Allred
- FIRST APPEARANCE: July 2001 (X-Force #116)
- ORIGINAL ROSTER: Anarchist, Orphan, Doop, Dead Girl, Vivisector, Phat, Venus Dee Milo, U-Go Girl, Spike
- HISTORY: Vertigo writer Milligan teamed with Madman creator Allred to transform X-Force into a saga of fame and celebrity. The survivors founded a new team in the satirical X-Statix.
- KEY STORYLINE: Milligan and Allred's first five issues ("Good Omens") perfectly encapsulates their tenure. Their most

famous storyline - in which a reanimated **Princess Diana** joins the team never saw

print.



ORIGINAL X-MEN

Jean Grey/

Marvel Girl

Angel

Storm

- CREATORS: Chris Claremont and Bob McLeod
- FIRST APPEARANCE: December 1982 (Marvel Graphic
- ORIGINAL ROSTER: Cannonball, Karma, Mirage, Sunspot, Wolfsbane
- HISTORY: Intended as the junior class of students (as opposed to superheroes) at Xavier's School, the New Mutants' adventures eventually rivalled the X-Men's for sheer outlandishness.
- KEY STORYLINE: Artist Bill Sienkiewicz's surreal 1984-1985 run is extraordinary, particularly the "Demon Bear" saga. The Art Adams pencilled "Asgardian Wars" is equally memorable.

Phoenix II



- CREATORS: Rob Liefeld and Fabian Nicieza
- FIRST APPEARANCE: April 1991 (New Mutants #100)
- ORIGINAL ROSTER: Cable. Cannonball, Boom Boom, Feral, Domino, Shatterstar, Warpath HISTORY: When Liefeld

took over New Mutants he transformed it into the edgier X-Force, starring a team which, true to its name, is more aggressive than the X-Men.

KEY STORYLINE: "The X-Cutioner's Song" saga, focusing on the Terminator-like team leader Cable, crossed over all (then) four X-titles. Pitting the mutants against the villainous Stryfe, it's quintessential X-Force.

X-MEN: DAYS OF FUTURE PAST



"We had scenes where we were shooting at over 3,000 frames per second"

X-Men. They're different worlds, different tones. You could merge them at some point, but you have to be sensitive about that."

QUICKER THAN THE EYE

Among the new technologies Singer employed was the latest generation of high-speed cameras.

"In the past we meet, for a brief period, the young Quicksilver character, and he has a really unique scene. I used the new Phantom cameras and shot photosonically, so we had scenes we were shooting at over 3,000 frames per second to put you into the world of Quicksilver, the way he perceives movement and speed. I think that will be fun for audiences."

As well as introducing Marvel's speedster (in the form of Evan Peters) to film audiences, *Future Past* also marks the screen debut of X-Men uber antagonist Bolivar Trask (played by Peter Dinklage), creator of the giant mutant-hunting robot Sentinels.

"What I wanted to create was a villain who's not so much a central villain," says Singer.

"He's a catalyst for villainy. Even though →





"HE'S MORE HOBO THAN HIPSTER"

James McAvoy returns as Charles the first...

HEN WE SPOKE TO YOU FOR First Class you said it was "quite weird to accept" that you were playing a young Patrick Stewart. How much weirder was it to play a young Patrick Stewart opposite **Patrick Stewart?**

× It's a bit of a barometer for you as an actor, taking on that part, banging it out to somebody else who's done your job for 14 years. I never thought for a minute when I stepped into Charles' shoes that I would ever have to work with Patrick, playing the same character. It's hilarious, man. It was a lot of pressure, but it was good. You just have to hit it hard. My team, we thought we were redoing it. We thought we were rebooting it. And then we find out that the previous cast are coming in and joining us. Fuck - did we mess up? Did we not do a good film? Do you not like us? But then you read the script and you realise that it's a beautiful device and a beautiful opportunity to do not just a mash-up of characters, which seems to be quite in vogue at the moment, but one that involves reflection and comparison. I was the new kid to them, even though I'd already done a whole film playing Charles. I was walking into the established old guard.

How do you think they felt?

"My team

thought

we were

join us"

rebooting it.

And then the

previous cast

come in and

 \times Hopefully good. Hopefully not, "What the fuck are you doing with my character?"

Is it easy to feel possessive about these characters?

× Nah, I don't think we get like that. Me, Michael, Ian and Patrick have all played Macbeth, and we've all played

it. I think that's true of these characters as well. If you're going to go back in time and show them at an earlier stage in their lives there's no point in doing it if they're just going to be exactly the same. The point of it is that you're showing the audience how people grow, and saying if he's A here, he's going to have to get to Z by the end of this franchise, and that's a lot of letters to get through, so there's a lot of shit that's going to happen. That's the interesting thing, isn't it? It alludes to the fact that big things are always going to be happening until he gets to be Patrick Stewart! Until I get to be Patrick Stewart... How has Charles evolved in this movie? He was a bit of a player in the last one...

him entirely differently. No one gets proprietorial about

He was a right old cad! He's still not the Charles we know from later, but he's not the guy from the first movie either. He's a mess and he's a junkie and he's all fucked up. Charles' main attribute, his key talent, is not really his special power, it's his empathy, it's his ability to care and look into other people's souls and lives and say, "I get it. I understand. This is what you need and this is what we're going to do." To be selfless and to care about the world - that's his key thing. Empathy. But in this movie his empathy is a hindrance. In this movie he feels his own pain and he feels everybody else's pain and he literally can't shut the voices out. The pain has become very real, so his empathy has become his achilles heel, his greatest power has become his greatest stumbling block.

How does he fit into the '70s?

× He looks wicked because he's got long flowing '70s hair and he wears psychedelic shirts and is rocking a bellbottom which I'm very excited about, because the '70s is my favourite era!

He's letting his freak flag fly, fashion wise...

× Oh, big time, big time! Fassbender - not a fan. He hates it. He wants it to be the '80s, which it will be for the next movie, I think. Personally I hate the '80s but I was very at home with this. I did 17 hours with hair extensions and costume fittings. I hadn't had time to take stock and have a look at what I looked like. And in between takes I caught sight of myself and for the first time in my career I was like, "Yes, I look fucking wicked! Yes, man, I look like I'm in the '70s!"

Do the clothes give you a '70s swagger?

× Yeah, totally, although he's got a '70s shuffle, I'd say. He's more hobo than hipster.

Nick Setchfield



• • July 2014 SFX

X-MEN: DAYS OF FUTURE PAST

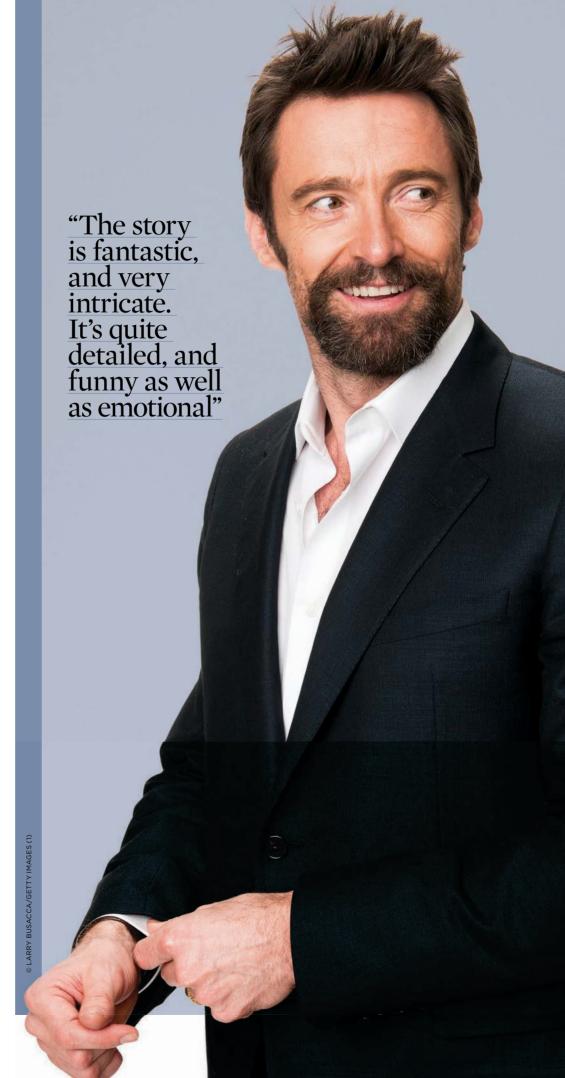


he's been a big weapons and technology manufacturer, having seen the pointlessness of the Vietnam War, he's very disheartened about war. He sees mutantkind as a catalyst for peace, as something that will enable for the first time all the nations of the world to join against a common enemy. Although he doesn't refer to it as an enemy, he refers to it as a struggle. Because he understands the evolutionary history, that whenever a more powerful species is introduced, like modern man was introduced into the world of the neanderthal, always the most powerful species will dominate. So he sees this as a battle against extinction for humankind. He believes there's some good in what he's doing. He's not a moustache-twirling villain, although he does have quite a moustache."

In Trask's crusade, *Future Past*, like all X-films, offers its share of social commentary. In the years since Singer directed his last mutant movie (2003's *X2*), the director's suffered no shortage of food for thought.

"The films have always had their basic theme about tolerance and co-existence. This one deals a little bit with war, and with fear of war. When we arrive in the past it's at the very end of a very long and terrible Vietnam War, and the whole goal is to go back in time and prevent an even greater war. It comments on the idea of 'If we knew then what we know now would we take action, would we change our fate, and would we sacrifice our potential existence to change the fate of humankind for the greater good?' There are big questions when people think about going back in time, and that's the journey of these characters." •>





CLAWING IT BACK

Hugh Jackman tells Nick Setchfield why it's seven times lucky for Wolverine

FTER A DECADE AND A HALF on Wolverine duty you might imagine Hugh Jackman routinely breakfasts on live walrus, swilled down with a cement shake. But when SFX meets him in the upscale warren of Claridges he's clearly between bouts of big-screen mutanthood. He cuts a lean, rangy figure today, his stellar Broadway smile surrounded by a thicket of silver-flecked whiskers. The accent's equally jolting - the very word Wolverine comes with the upward vowel trajectory of a true Australian. Quick to laugh, admirably candid, he's infinitely more affable, infinitely less snarly than his adamantium-enhanced alter ego. X-Men: Days Of Future Past marks the sixth time he's played Marvel's claw-popping berserker - seventh if you count his film-stealing cameo in X-Men: First Class. "I'm counting it!" he laughs.

So, this is your seventh time playing Wolverine...

What's your touchstone for the character these days? Is it the script you're currently playing? The comic books? Or do you have a personal, instinctive take on who he is now?

× I think the last one is the basis of it. I still read the comic books – more now, actually, because I'm always worried we end up getting a little narrower in our responses. I don't want to become like that, so I go back to the comic book and it shakes me up. There are so many different interpretations of him, visually as well as the text. I've sort of accrued this sense of who he is, and that grew a lot out of working with James Mangold on *The Wolverine*, because he really pushed me as an actor with that. I tried to bring that to the *Days Of Future Past* set. And the script, of course. But 15 years I've been playing him now, so, right or wrong, I have a version of him within me.

Funny how hard drinking can get you

Does there come a point where you begin to feel proprietorial, that he's your character?

imes I always assume – I think rightly – that it's going to go on past me, as do all great characters. They outlive the actors that play them. I think – I know – this one will go on, and I like to think that I'll be fine with that. But actually I'm enjoying playing him more than ever lately, so maybe it'll be tougher for me than I think.

In *Days Of Future Past* some of the cast get to see their parts being played by younger men...

× Yeah. I think they all enjoyed that, actually! A lot. I can tell you Ian [McKellen] and Patrick [Stewart] were thrilled to have those guys play them. It's an interesting thing. I don't think I'm particularly proprietorial about it, actually. It's obviously an important thing for me and my career, and I'm sure I'll always look back at it with increasing affinity. As the years have gone on I've felt more at home with the character, and living with it as part of what I've done.

And it's the kind of role that you know you've put your stamp on.

× Yeah, and I'll be blunt with you – before doing *Les Mis* or a movie like *Prisoners*, there was a little period there where I thought, "Hmm, 90% of people only know me for that, or only think I can do that." So as there have been more things that people have seen it makes me enjoy it more

You're tackling one of the great comic book stories with this movie. What is it about this story that makes it so revered?

× I don't know why people love that particular comic book so much... I've read it, but I haven't read any of the blogs. I think it's perfect for this movie. I've heard some people say, "Oh, X-Men is trying to do The Avengers, trying to get everyone in and make this big thing..." They're going to be really surprised. The story is fantastic, and very intricate. It's quite detailed, and funny as well as very emotional - more emotional than people may think. And they will definitely love the future in this movie. I know the fans love the Sentinels, and we've flirted with that a little bit in the past but never really attacked it, and I think Bryan has done a really smart job. I've seen some of that stuff and it's phenomenal. It feels very genuinely apocalyptic. Not just visually but the tone of it. The range and the tone of this movie is really quite incredible. There are some laughs in it, and there are fun sequences but you do feel that impending doom.

What impresses you about the way Bryan's brought it to the screen?

X You can't underestimate how hard it is to do these
movies. Next to Avatar it's the biggest movie Fox has ever
made. You have a massive cast – and just the logistics of
that was incredible. And to have all those storylines pay

→

X-MEN: DAYS OF FUTURE PAST



"X-Men:
Apocalypse will
be a separate
story. It's not tied
into this"

Singer's own journey guiding the children
of the atom is far from over. As he speaks with
us, he's preparing to direct X-Men: Apocalypse,
bringing the mutant's longtime shapeshifting
titular foe to cinemas everywhere in 2016.

"It's a separate film," he says of his next
instalment. "Yet at the same time that film
will be very much a sequel to this. This sets
up the world and where we're gonna be when
we enter Apocalypse. I'd say it's a separate
story though. It's not tied into this. Things
that happen in this movie, tampering with
time travel etc, might just have an effect on
the future and the deep past. I don't know yet
if we'll see the future characters. But the goal
is to introduce some familiar characters when
they're younger. That's all I'll say about that."
In the meantime, Singer's happy that
X-fans are welcoming his return to the epic he
originated on screen.

"The actors did a great job and I'm very
proud of the story," he remarks before returning
to his LA editing suite. "It's heartfelt."

X-Men: Days Of Future Past will be released
on Thursday 22 May.

proud of the story," he remarks before returning

X-Men: Days Of Future Past will be released on Thursday 22 May.











off, with the device of time travel, which we all know is one of the hardest things to pull off anyway – it's very hard to make logic out of it, and not have too many holes in it. And Bryan's obsessed by that. He's very ambitious, Bryan. Not only did he want this to be his best *X-Men*, he wanted it to be the best comic book movie and the best time travel movie ever made. High bars for everything! I think he's grown so much as a director since we first worked together 14 or 15 years ago. He was going to do the third one and I was upset that he didn't. He had to pull out. It's great to have him back.

You popped up for about ten seconds in X-Men: First Class and you got the biggest cheer of the movie...

ĭ I did get a good line...

And you got a good reaction. You do seem universally loved as Wolverine. Do you feel bulletproof when you're playing him now?

X No, no, no... I'm an actor, man! The sea of doubt! The sea of doubt [laughs]! And I want there to be. I also don't read all the blogs. I'm sure you could find people who don't like me. But I am the only one who's done it, so I do have that going for me. So far! When we did X-Men Origins: Wolverine, I tell you, people were very upfront with me that they didn't like that. So even if they say. "Listen, you're good," they still blame me for that movie. And rightly so, because I'm in every bloody scene, and I'm the one who said, "Yeah, let's do this script!" [laughs] It's gone beyond just "How do I play the character?" I feel a kind of responsibility for the arc of the character, and how it's portrayed. And I get that. I'm a fan of things. I wasn't an X-Men fan growing up, but I was a huge sports fan. To give that control over to a bunch of people in Hollywood and see your character come to life is hard. So I listen. I have always listened to people. And by the way, X-Men fans stop me all the time. And they tell me. They'll say, "I like this" or "I like that". You're right – it's gone beyond [despairing] "Oh, will they like me as Wolverine?" It's "Will they like this movie?" "Will they like where we're taking the character?"

So in a way there's even more responsibility on your shoulders now.

× Probably, yeah. I feel it, anyway.

You've never traded on the character. You've never played anything similar. Is that a conscious decision? Do people offer you a lot of pseudo-Wolverine roles?

imes Yeah, I get offered that a lot. It was a weird thing for me – I never would have got Wolverine if I had done *Kate And Leopold* first. People would go, "He's tall, he's long, he's skinny, and he's not like him at all..." So I'm forever grateful that I got that first, as an unknown, in an era when the internet was relatively on the down low. But I was also aware after its success that I needed to actively try and do other things. I was certainly getting offered a lot of *X-Men* derivatives. And I still do. And some of them are good projects, but I'm like "No, it's too late..."

I can imagine you getting offered something like a Dirty Harry remake...

× There was talk of that after the first *X-Men* came out. They came to me and said, "You know, there's talk about that coming up". I said, "First of all, unless you have Clint directing it, and his approval, I'm not going to be part of that movie." It would have been a bad idea.

So where do you want to take Wolverine next in

Wolverine 3?

imes I don't know yet. We're talking it through. I still am very ambitious for the character. And tonally I feel like we corrected the ship with the last one. But I feel we can still go further, in a way. If I did another one I'm 99.9% sure it would be the last, so that will inform what it is for me.

Would you take it back to Japan or would you move it beyond that story?

 \times I'd probably move it to a different visual palette. I'm pretty sure that would move.

Are there any classic comic book storylines that you'd love to get stuck into?

× Well, of course we're looking at *Old Man Logan*, because that may be the only option left at this point [laughs]! We are looking at a lot of different storylines. No one has jumped out. You can tell from my answer that we're still

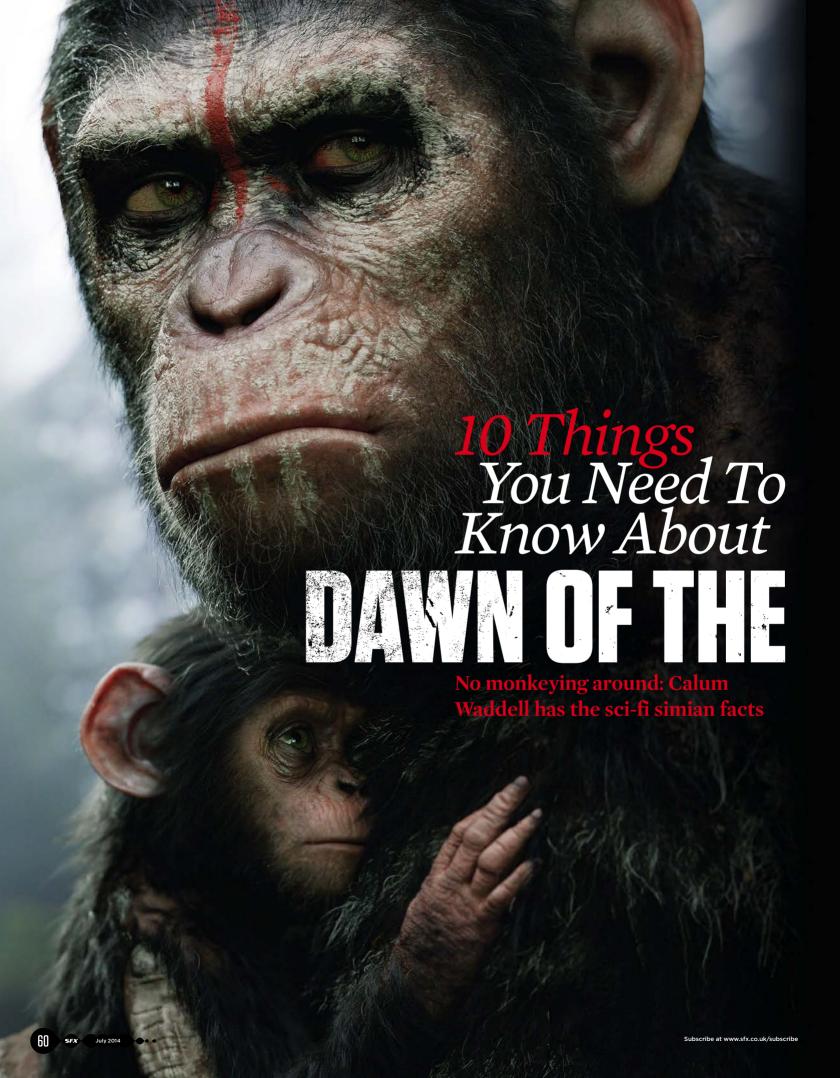
"If I did another one I'm 99.9% sure it would be the last, so that will inform it"

working it out. I'm working with Jim Mangold, which is exciting. Jim came on board *The Wolverine* after Darren [Aronofsky] left, so he inherited it. And of all the things that Jim can do, one of the great things he does is develop scripts. I'm excited to see what we can come up with, but I haven't *signed on* signed on. I'm genuinely at that point where unless it's better than the last one I'm not going to do it.

What if it's as good as the last one?

× If the script is as good? Hmm. I don't know if that will get me across the line, man. I think it has to be better. I can still see where we can improve on the last one. I love the intimacy of that story, I liked the small stuff, I liked that it was a little unexpected. I don't want to get into specifics, because it just upsets people, but there are certain parts of that story where I felt we were predictable. And I don't think you need to do that with Wolverine. What's exciting is that you can make it a more interior story, and people actually prefer that. And that was good to show and convince everyone – especially everyone who greenlights the movies!





THIS IS THE EIGHTH IN THE **PLANET OF THE APES SERIES.**



However, taking into account the entire franchise to date, it actually functions as part seven. For those unaware - 2011's Rise Of The

Planet Of The Apes worked as a reboot in the finest "JJ Abrams does Star Trek" sense of the term: fitting in nicely as a prequel to the first five films (which kicked off with the 1968 Charlton Heston original). Moreover, because the subsequent sequels - beginning with Beneath The Planet Of The Apes in 1970 - exist within a parallel universe of events, the series is wide open for copious backstory and reinterpretation. The odd one out? Tim Burton's mythology-muddling 2001 remake.

THE ORIGINAL HUMAN CAST IS NOT RETURNING.



The plot involving James Franco's Dr William Rodman, and his zoologist love interest Caroline Aranha (Freida Pinto), from

Rise Of The Planet Of The Apes has- for all intents and purposes - come to a close. The new non-simian stars of Dawn Of The Planet Of The Apes include Jason Clarke, Gary Oldman (as the script's villainous antianimal antagonist) and Keri Russell. On the other hand, Andy Serkis still features as perennial primate leader Caesar.



VIRAL FACTOR!



Dawn Of The Planet Of The Apes will also highlight how vulnerable mankind has become. The human-eliminating virus that was

established in Rise Of The Planet Of The Apes has now had a decade to travel and do its damage. And it has, Big time.

APES ON HORSEBACK.



As in the original 1968 trendsetter, we will once again see the iconic image of primates striding upon stallions and

galloping into a head-to-head collision with their human adversaries. Darwin would doubtlessly be confused.

DAWN OF THE PLANET OF THE *APES* IS THE FIRST FILM MATT Reeves has directed since LET ME IN BACK IN 2010.



While the sequel was developed under the hand of director Rupert Wyatt, who relaunched the property with Rise Of The Planet

Of The Apes, he ultimately chose to leave the film due to fears that Fox was not allowing him enough time in development.

THE STORY IS SET <u>Approximately ten years</u> AFTER *rise of the planet* OF THE APES.



As Dawn Of The Planet Of The Apes begins, the human world has been at war with one another while the apes have risen, bonded and started to build their own society...

EXPECT SOME POLITICS.



Caesar and his simian cohorts - be they chimp, orangutan or gorilla - agree that "no ape shall kill another" and are on the cusp of setting by example. Andy Serkis has revealed in recent interviews that the apes are intent on forming a more egalitarian society.

THIS IS THE SECOND MOST EXPENSIVE *APES* FILM TO DATE...



When adjusted for inflation, the budget of 1968's Planet Of The Apes - \$5,400,000 - would today cost approximately \$35,500,000.

Tim Burton's film, however, just makes it as the franchise's priciest flick - adjusted for inflation its 2001 budget of \$100,000,000 would equal \$130,000,000 today. But Dawn Of The Planet Of The Apes still has some major money behind it – a reported \$120,000,000 of movie moolah is invested in this hopeful summer smash. Its predecessor cost \$93,000,000 to bring to the screen.

THIS IS THE FIRST FILM SINCE 1973 TO FOCUS ON THE WAR BETWEEN **HUMANS AND PRIMATES...**



Whereas the *Apes* films always feature conflict between man and animal, the all-out war was only depicted in 1972's Conquest Of

The Planet Of The Apes, and its 1973 sequel, Battle For The Planet Of The Apes. The former is the better of the two. Judging from the trailer for the latest episode, this is also the Apes outing that Matt Reeves has been looking to for inspiration.

PREPARE TO GO BANANAS!



Plans are afoot to continue the Apes series with another entry in 2016. And Reeves has committed to directing. It's a madhouse we

tell you, a madhouse... SFX

Godzilla has a new keeper: Monsters director **Gareth Edwards. Nick Setchfield discovers** the passion behind the project... 62 SFX July 2014



LOVE MONSTER MOVIES," SAYS Gareth Edwards, simply and sincerely. "If I was stuck in a subgenre for the rest of my life, and it was monster movies, I would die very happy.

As the director of Godzilla, Edwards radiates a sense of job satisfaction that only comes from unleashing 350 feet of raging stomp-beast on unsuspecting urban conurbations. Winningly humble, he's in London to talk up his movie to the world's press - and marvel at the career arc that's tornadoed him from 2010's indie darling Monsters to a blockbusting, dollar-loaded resurrection of cinema's apex predator. It's only his second film, astonishingly. "I'm from Nuneaton!" he protests, still blinking at the impossibility of it all.

One thing's soon obvious. Edwards bleeds geek. And he's a bona fide devotee of the Big G. "It's such an amazing icon," he enthuses, as SFX probes his primal memories of the Toho Studios terror. "I'm sure I saw some toys as a kid before I knew what he was, and probably thought they were dinosaurs or something. Unfortunately I think my first real experience of Godzilla was the 1970s Hanna-Barbera cartoon - which isn't too bad, in that compared to Godzooky he was like a force of nature. After that it was the [early '90s] Channel 4 screenings.

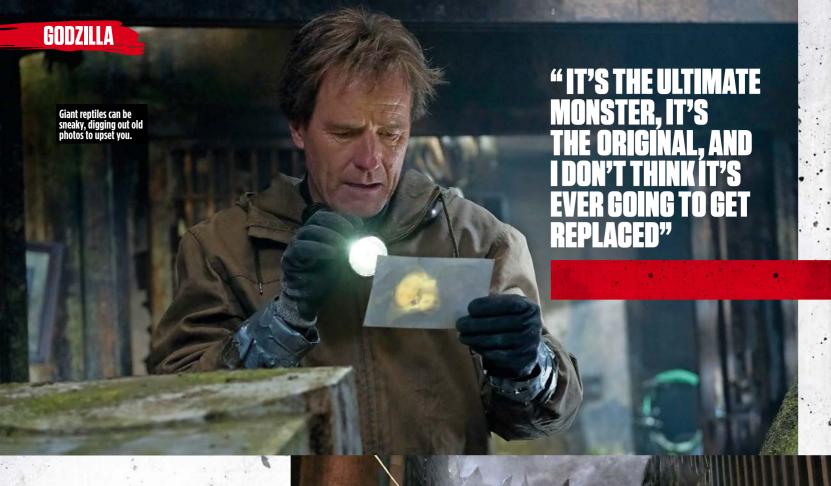
"I was a big fan of sci-fi, and I'd collected everything you could get from the '50s and the '60s, War Of The Worlds and This Island Earth and all this sort of geeky stuff. And then suddenly they started showing the Japanese creature features, and it was a whole new path, like someone had opened

a door to a world of sci-fi that I hadn't even thought about. People forget that before the internet it was hard to get hold of anything - you had to wait for it to be shown on TV. So there was a long wait, sometimes, to see stuff. You'd read in magazines that it existed but you never really got to see it."

COMPLETING THE COLLECTION

As Warner Bros and Legendary Pictures courted him for the gig he chanced upon a complete collection of Godzilla movies in a comic shop in Australia. "I bought them all," he laughs, "and then I felt like I had to hide them so people didn't say 'Hang on, why has Gareth just bought ten Godzilla movies?" Even though they would never make that connection I was paranoid that they would!"

That stash doubtlessly didn't include 1998's Godzilla, a hollow Hollywood riff on Japan's most potent big-screen myth that sunk in the chasm between hype and execution. "I own a lot of Roland Emmerich movies," says Edwards, sportingly. "I think he's a great filmmaker. Probably the problem people had with that film was that it was called Godzilla, and for a lot of fans it didn't tick the boxes that needed to be ticked for it to be a Godzilla movie, especially, I guess, in the design. For us the main reference was the original 1954 black and white Toho film, just because it was ahead of its time in that it took something so crazy very seriously. There are scenes in there where you've got people dying of radiation sickness, families mourning, very similar to post-Hiroshima imagery. It's a very serious film in places



and quite harrowing, and not the cheesy B-movie that some people expect."

Edwards was determined that his own take would be an equally weaponised metaphor. While the 1954 original was a fire-breathing parable for the age of the A-bomb, the 2014 version roars a contemporary warning.

"It's got to work on two levels. It's got to appeal to a mass audience. People can go if they don't want to think about anything, if they just want to be entertained. Hopefully it's a fun film that they can sit and watch, and they'll be very happy. But then on another level I wasn't interested in doing a movie that didn't brush and explore certain ideas, and say something in places – without feeling like it was preaching. The theme that we ended up embracing was man vs nature, that we'd somehow opened this Pandora's box when we got into the nuclear age, what happens when nature comes back to bite us – and that's obviously a literal thing in our movie."

It's hard not to feel a topical shudder at *Godzilla*'s scenes of global apocalypse. Far from the gleeful destruct-o-porn of a Michael Bay movie, they conjure the CNN live-feed dread of such true life disaster zones as 2011's Fukushima meltdown.

"Our film's not about Fukushima," Edwards is quick to clarify. "It's a fictional city and in our film it's an event that happened 15 years ago. I grew up in a time where you didn't have World War Two, you didn't have Vietnam or the JFK assassination. The horrible images that are burned in your mind are September 11 and the tsunami and hurricanes and earthquakes. So when you do a film like this, and you're trying to dip into that well of nightmares, and things that feel real, it's inevitable that that imagery keeps coming to the surface. In a previous decade you would

have thought that only in a movie could those things happen. Unfortunately we've been able to witness them for real in the last ten years, and so when you make a film like this it's nearly impossible not to acknowledge some of those visuals because they're so horrific. It instantly taps into those memories."

'We're gonna need

BEATING THE COMPETITION

Godzilla must also compete with Hollywood's recent pretenders to the crown. From Cloverfield to Pacific Rim and even Transformers, modern movies routinely trade in classic, city-trampling Toho iconography. How do you keep the grandaddy of them all fresh and vital?

"Those films all have their place," says Edwards, "but I think the film that I've always wanted to see is in a different place to those, tonally. I like to think that it's not that Godzilla has to justify why it exists, because Godzilla is the monster of all time. It's more that these

other movies should have to justify why they exist next to *Godzilla*. It's the ultimate monster, it's the original, and I don't think it's ever going to get replaced."

Edwards has armed his movie with top-flight acting talent. Rising stars Aaron Taylor-Johnson and Elizabeth Olsen are teamed with the Oscar-friendly likes of Ken Watanabe and Juliette Binoche while Breaking Bad's Bryan Cranston brings the emotional punch as a grief-haunted patriarch with a personal connection to the beast. "I was just very lucky," says Edwards of his cast. "I kept forgetting that we're making this major film that is going to be released around the world. You have this fantasy about people you want to work with, but you think 'Oh no, they'll never want to work with me', and then you remember 'Oh yeah, we're doing Godzilla'."

For all its character-led drama, Edwards ultimately sells his *Godzilla* as proof of the power of cinema, the sorcery of the screen.



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"When you have a good story with characters you can get those cinematic moments, those epic little chills that are unique to watching a movie. You can get it when there's a great storyline and you can get it when there are great visual effects. There are certain shots in certain films where you just go 'Fucking hell, that's amazing', and you get chills. Your secret hope, you pray, every time a movie comes out, is 'Maybe this is the one that's going to nail it.' As I've got older it's got more and more rare that you sit and watch a movie and you feel like a kid again. And I think that's why everyone secretly goes - they want that feeling that they used to have, and that was definitely the goal in this. We tried to attack it every which way we could, through character, through story, through the visuals and the spectacle. I really wanted, as many times as we could in the movie, to get that little feeling of 'Holy fuck! This is cool!' I feel like you get that feeling as much from restraining yourself as from chucking everything you can at the screen. When you hold back is when you get that [intake of breath].

"There's something about the process of making a blockbuster where, if you're not careful, you can get seduced by the CGI and the setpiece spectacle, and you just get fatigued and it starts losing its value. You're looking at the greatest thing that you could ever see but you don't feel anything, and I think that's pointless. If someone comes and sees this movie and they don't get goosebumps once then we've totally failed. It's the whole point of being allowed to do something like Godzilla – that you get those chills, and you get that feeling of being a kid again."

B-MOVIE HEAVEN

He may have returned *Godzilla* to the big screen with bleeding-edge FX but Edwards still champions the low-rent, high-camp appeal of the Toho franchise – movies that replaced the Hiroshima shiver of the 1954 movie with bright, rubbery charm.

"I like anything from the Showa era," he enthuses. "Destroy All Monsters... Just the idea of Monster Island I really like. I've got a high tolerance. It got a bit campy at times, some of that stuff, but I just filter it. Even if it's campy, it goes through my eyes but then I turn it into



"Toho had sign-off on the creature design, so whatever we came up with needed their approval.

"The main thing we had to reinvent was the face. You look at Godzilla throughout the years, all the different versions that there were, and some of them can be a little bit goofy. If you were to take that face and put it in a modern movie people would find it

unrealistic. We ended up exploring everything. We did over 100 completely different designs. I said to Weta, who were doing the design work, 'Make the dog version, make the lizard version, make the dragon version, make the cat version, make the eagle version, make the T-Rex version...' What would happen is one would stand out as 'That looks cool' or 'That aspect of it looks cool, keep that...' or 'That's staying, the rest can change. Now make ten other versions of the snout.' You were just chucking things in, trying to find something that felt right.

"We wanted to have the fins, obviously, and there's a certain structure to those fins.

Some of them I would jokingly call the Christmas tree fins.

I didn't want to have them look silly - it had to feel part of his body, but to have this silhouette where they're sort of fractured. And we did that. We made them more brittle looking, as if they'd arrived at that shape by breaking over the years.

"It's a bit of everything. There's a bit of gorilla in there, and there's a bit of shark, with the fin... There's a bit of Starship Troopers, a bit of T-Rex. We basically went through all of our favourite monsters and tried to put aspects that we liked into one creature, and see if we could find something that felt a bit different. There's a bit of Giger's Alien – it's hard to beat the design of what they did back then. It's the high bar for monster design in terms of something that doesn't feel of this world."









"I OFTEN WATCH B-MOVIES ON MY OWN — IT MAKES ME FEEL LIKE A KID, AND I FEEL ALL GOSY"

something serious, and try and enjoy it as if it was a real thing. I have the same thing with shows like *Lost In Space* and *Star Trek*. I could watch them on a loop, as wallpaper, wherever I live. I never got bored of that stuff."

And there's a knack, he says, for watching them in an irony-free way. "Some of it's silly and campy and cheap but that's because that's the only thing they could do. I try and picture that it was a real-life event, that it really happened, and there is potentially an elevated version, but they just couldn't afford to do it that way. I don't normally take the piss out of B-movies much. I kind of take them quite seriously, maybe because I watch them on my own! Maybe if a friend came round and we watched them together we'd just rip the shit out of it! But I often watch B-movies on my own because I like having them on in the background. It makes me feel like a kid, and I feel all cosy. It's something to do with Sunday afternoons, when they would show stuff like

Clash Of The Titans on TV. It's something really warm, a nice feeling you get."

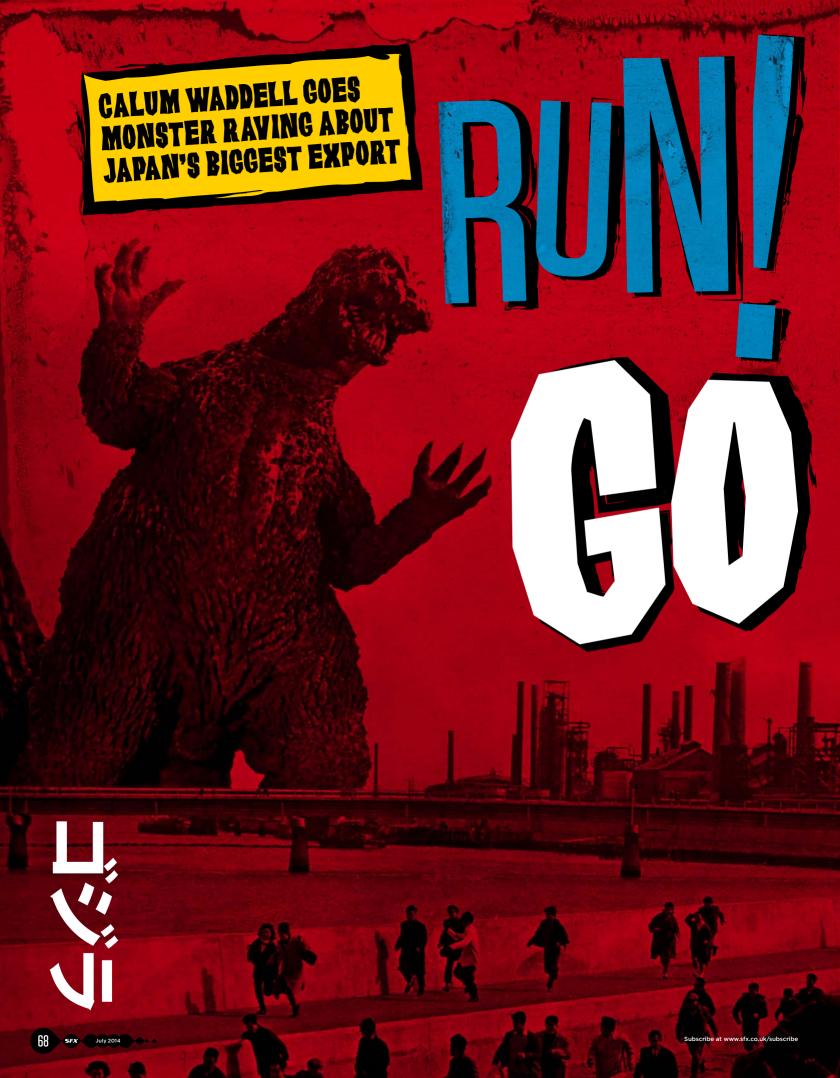
Given the tone of his vision, you wonder if Edwards would struggle to accommodate some of the goofier elements of the original franchise. Or could a potential sequel bring us his unique take on MechaGodzilla?

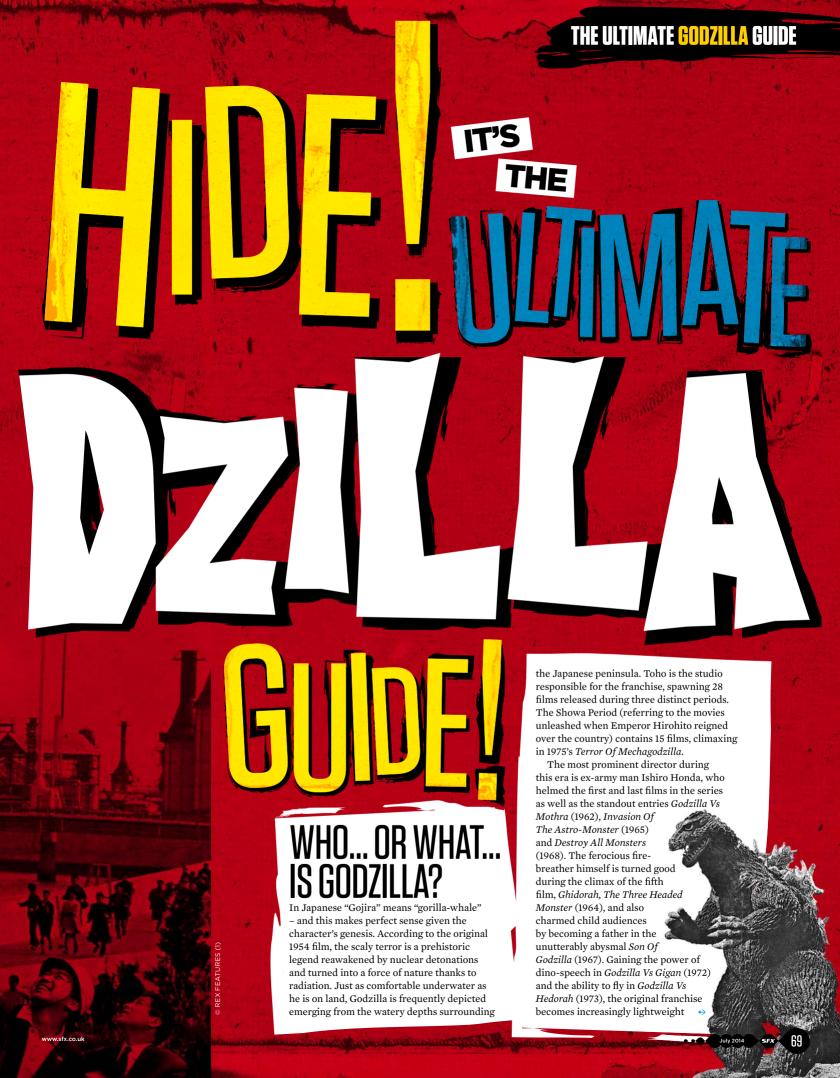
"What I really enjoy, and would be a lot of fun, is the realistic, grounded interpretation of some of those ideas. I don't know about MechaGodzilla, that would be tricky, and maybe *Pacific Rim* has done that. But I think there is a possible interpretation for things like Monster Island and the pop-culture of it all. I've got some thoughts on that, but we'll see what the appetite is based on how this one goes."

You suspect a realist take on toon brat Godzooky might be pushing it, mind.

"Maybe," Edwards smiles. "That might be one step too far."

Godzilla is released on Thursday 15 May.





as it progresses into family-oriented insanity. During this timeframe a genre known as "kaiju" (translation: "strange beast") became celebrated in and out of Japan with spin-offs such as the Gamera franchise (beginning in 1965) and such oddities as Honda's own The War Of The Gargantuas (1966).

The Big G finally returned to his old population-pummelling self with Godzilla 1985 (in, erm, 1984), marking the instigation of what kaiju fans know as the "Heisei Period". This time fans of oversized ogres were treated to seven instalments - including Godzilla Vs SpaceGodzilla (1994) and Godzilla Vs

> Destoroyah (1995), in which Toho actually terminate its marauding

menace in anticipation of his Hollywood debut. Of course, the less said about Roland Emmerich's 1998 fiasco the better. Indeed, so disastrous was the Englishlanguage version of "the King of the Monsters" that Toho did the only sensible thing: resurrected its rampaging city-wrecker for one final fling.

The "Millennium Series" began with Godzilla 2000 (1999) and continued with five more flicks until 2004's Godzilla: Final Wars. Thanks to the addition of CGI wizardry. Godzilla's final Japanese jaunts feature some explosive monster-fights - with many of the old Toho favourites squaring off against each other. The "Millennium Series" reached its conclusion with the incoherent but lively Godzilla: Final Wars (2004) - spearheading the way for Gareth Edwards and his forthcoming attempt at Westernising the Far East's foremost screen fiend.

TOP FIVE MUST-SEE

GODZILLA 1954

A surprisingly bleak creature feature, this original spin for the atomically birthed behemoth takes in numerous subplots (including a suicidal scientist, postwar paranoia and a tragic love triangle) but also excels in city-stomping action. Japan's greatest cinematic juggernaut appears just over 20 minutes in and - thanks to the decision to keep the costumed-colossus in the shadows - resonates as one of the most threatening big-screen beasts in history. The nowunavailable American release from 1956 features US actor Raymond Burr and several newly shot English-language insert scenes.

THRA VS GODZILLA 1964

A firm fan favourite - this fourth instalment boasts stunning cinemascope photography, beautifully rendered miniatures and a brilliant beat 'em

up finale between a giant moth (Mothra) and our favourite lizard-tailed titan. Moreover, with a stinging anti-corporate subplot - involving Japanese businessmen trying to kidnap a Mothra egg - there is even some socio-political resonance in amongst the action.

INCKEDIBLE, UNSTOPPABLE TITAN OF TERRO

MONSTERS



FGH Five Greatest Battles



KING KONG VS GODZILLA 1962

Rumours have persisted that in the original version of this movie it's the Land of the Rising Sun's finest that comes out on top. Don't believe the hype: the only conclusion is the one that currently exists everywhere - King Kong wins it. Their scrap made this the most successful Godzilla flick of them all.



MOTHRA VS GODZILLA 1964

Mothra being a giant, erm, moth: a factor which might make her seem like a less than worthy opponent for the main event spot of this movie (American distributors tried to hide the mothy truth). Thankfully, though, Godzilla is sent packing in what amounts to one of his most ferocious sparring sessions



MOTHRA. GODZILLA AND

(FROM GHIDORAH, THE THREE-HEADED MONSTER)

It takes a team-up from the three erstwhile enemies to see away the threat of King Ghidorah - a monster from Mars with a battle cry that is akin to having someone scrape their nails down a blackboard.



GODZILLA VS BIOLLANTE 1989

For this entry Toho permitted fans to submit new character ideas for a Big G smackdown. The result was Biollante - a scientific experiment gone wrong. The poppy-headed, alligatormouthed, Venus Flytrap-armed result is a real oddity - but makes for one of Godzilla's more formidable foes.



VS SPACEGODZILLA 1994

Travelling to Earth at the speedof-light, SpaceGodzilla is a cosmically created mish-mash of the real thing (it's a long story). He arrives on the island where Godzilla and his son hang out only to kidnap the junior-dino. Naturally, father gets furious...



GHIDORAH, THE THREE-HEADED MONSTER 1964

Mothra manages to communicate with Godzilla and convince him to turn "good" for the sake of saving planet Earth from space-born baddie Ghidorah. An extended final battle, which also includes the presence of the pterodactyl-hybrid Rodan, is pure popcorn perfection - although Godzilla would not return to his metropolis-mashing ways until...

GODZILLA 1985 1984

the '80s version of Godzilla on a badass, blockbuster scale. Also known as

Return Of Godzilla, this Cold War-era tale of Russian nuclear weapons and facesucking sea-slaters (yes, really) finally hits its stride when the main event appears and turns Tokyo into a trampled-down wreck of rubble.

GODZILLA: FINAL WARS 2004

The film so utterly insane that it split the opinion of kaiju fans in regards to its worth. It's essential viewing for any lover of bizarro-cinema. Featuring emo-haired Martians battling humans, and a cavalcade of monsters invading Earth, this schlocktastic Japanese swansong for the green-gargantuan rarely fails to intrigue and is never boring.

GODZILLA FACT ATTACK!

Indeed, his various filmic costumes are actually different shades of grey.

Godzilla has had three different vounglings. Godzilla's official "child" - dubbed Minilla - is introduced in Son Of Godzilla (1967) and appears in a total of five films. Godzooky is the animated variant while a newly created bug-eyed "Godzilla Jnr" was brought to the forefront for Godzilla Vs SpaceGodzilla. The whereabouts of Miss Godzilla have never been revealed.

Initially a new prehistoric scavenger. Gryphon, was developed to battle Godzilla in the Emmerich movie but Toho called foul on Hollywood creating any new characters.

Godzilla has actually fought and killed Roland Emmerich's Godzilla. In 2004's Godzilla: Final Wars Emmerich's entity is smashed into the Sydney Opera House and set alight with a blast of atomic breath. Easy-peasy.



A statue of Godzilla was unveiled in Tokyo's Ginza district in 1995. It is surprisingly small - but a larger version also exists at the door to Toho Studios (located elsewhere in

A large Godzilla statue is also located near Bangkok's notorious Soi Cowboy "red-light" area. He is planted outside the Matoi Chaya Japanese Restaurant (address: 9/16-17. Thaniva Rd).

In 1973 Toho unveiled a familyfriendly television show called Zone Fighter, about visiting aliens, and made Godzilla a

> recurring guest star. The characters even build a cave for him in case he might need a nightcap after his frequent dinner visits.

In Japan "Godzilla watermelons" exist. They are stuck with a logo depicting the monster's visage.

Godzilla has a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. It was awarded to him in 2004.



BEYOND THE SCREEN The Big G stomps into other media...

Believe it or not, SHIELD has a special Godzilla unit. Marvel Comics licensed the character for a comic book series that ran from 1977 until 1979. The story had Godzilla threatening New York and none other than Tony Stark was put in charge of defending Earth. But this is not the only example of bizarre things happening to Tokyo's titanic

city toppler when he moves from live action to cartoon form. The character won a Hanna-Barbera TV toon that ran from 1978 until 1979 and was awarded with a "comic relief" winged-dino kid called Godzooky. Slightly more successful with kaiju buffs was the surprisingly slick animated series that followed up the

Hollywood "blockbuster" in 1998 (and ran until 2000). Back in Japan, many franchise favourites were transported to primetime in a show called Godzilla Island - which ran for 256 three-minute episodes. And let us not forget the Godzilla videogames either. They range from the rank (King Of The Monsters

on the Super Nintendo, in which the character is damaged by walking into buildings!) to the delirious (Destroy All Monsters on the Xbox is effectively Street Fighter II but with kaiju characters).

THE MONSTER Out monster-watching this blockbuster season? Here are a few beasts Tom Fordy recommends you keep an eye out for SPOTTER'S FIELD GUIDE

GODZILLA GOJIRA

FIRST SEEN: Godzilla (1954) APPEARANCE: Common or garden amphibian/dinosaur/ radioactive monster/man in rubber suit thingy.

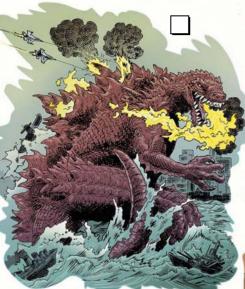
SIZE: Between 160-330 feet tall, depending on which movie you're watching. Let's just sav enormous.

NATURAL HABITAT: Usually found under the sea, though will occasionally come on to dry land to trample/save the city.

DIET: Something particularly fiery, judging from the atomic breath.

BEHAVIOURAL PATTERNS:

Stomping, roaring, shooting lasers from its eyes, scrapping with other giant



MOTHRA MOSURA

APPEARANCE: Bright blue eyes, colourful wings, big moth face. SIZE: Up to 260-ft fully grown.

NATURAL HABITAT: The remote Infant Island, where she's worshipped as a divine being (the locals don't get out much). LIFECYCLE: Hatches from an egg as a giant caterpillar, before going into a cocoon and emerging as a terrifying winged insect. DIET: Oversized jumpers and linen, presumably. Boulder-sized mothballs highly recommended.



KONG MEGAPRIMATUS KONG

FIRST SEEN: King Kong (1933)

APPEARANCE: A massive ape with human-like qualities. SIZE: Reports vary, but 20-ft-plus. You'll know him when

NATURAL HABITAT: Skull Island - a prehistoric getaway in the Pacific. He's been spotted in New York a few times over the years, though - usually at the top (and bottom)

DIET: Eats Tyrannosaurs for breakfast.

MATING HABITS: Gentlemen prefer blondes. And so do



CLOVER ABRAMICUS FOUND FOOTAGUS

FIRST SEEN: Cloverfield (2008)

APPEARANCE: Disappointing when seen up close. **SIZE:** Twenty-five stories high and counting. NATURAL HABITAT: Origins are unknown, but makes

itself cosy in New York. At the expense of everyone else who lives there, of course.

TOXICITY WARNING: Covered in dog-sized parasites that drop off, bite, and make your head explode. MATING HABITS: Unfortunately slices the head off the only female big enough to cuddle up with.





GIGAN KAIJU SPACICUS

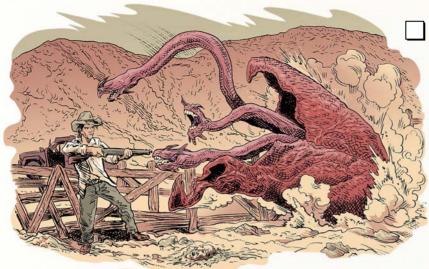
FIRST SEEN: Godzilla Vs Gigan (1972)

APPEARANCE: Like a cyborg ninja T-Rex - with hooks for hands and a buzzsaw protruding from his belly. SIZE: Near 400-ft at his biggest.

NATURAL HABITAT: Outer space, though he's forever being summoned to Tokyo for some good old-fashioned monster carnage.

NATURAL ENEMIES: Godzilla.

BEHAVIOURAL PATTERNS: Bold as brass when he first arrives, only to scarper with his razor-sharp tail between his legs the second he realises he's beaten.



RHEDOSAURUS FATHOMICUS HARRYHAUSENUS

FIRST SEEN: The Beast From 20,000 Fathoms (1953) APPEARANCE: Your basic 1950s-style dinosaur. SIZE: About 65ft - large enough

to destroy most of the North
American coast.

NATURAL HABITAT: The Big

Apple, though things have changed there since a nuclear test awoke him from his 100-million-year nap. **DIET:** People, mostly.

TOXICITY WARNING: Its blood carries a prehistoric disease, which is as deadly as the beast itself. If it bleeds, run the other way (which you should be doing anyway, you loon).

GRABOID LONGISSIMUS MANEATICUS

FIRST SEEN: Tremors (1990)

APPEARANCE: Eyeless grub-like creatures with a deadly beak and tentacles.

SIZE: Can grow to 30-ft. If Kevin Bacon doesn't kill them first, that is.

NATURAL HABITAT: Live underground, where they hunt for food using the vibrations from above.

DIET: Cattle, sheep, cars, Texans - anything that makes a noise. LIFECYCLE: The Graboids transform into surface-dwelling monsters known as "Shriekers" and, eventually, "Ass Blasters". But only in rubbish straight-to-video sequels.





GAMERA TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA KAIJU

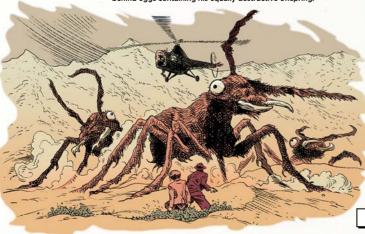
FIRST SEEN: Gamera (1965)

APPEARANCE: A flying, fire-breathing giant turtle. With tusks. **SIZE:** 250-ft, give or take.

NATURAL HABITAT: Claimed by some to have been created in the lost city of Atlantis, as a defender of the Earth. Now enjoys stomping around Japan and making a mess.

DIET: Flames, uranium, plutonium - that sort of thing.

MATING HABITS: Despite being a man-turtle, somehow leaves behind eggs containing his equally destructive offspring.



GIANT ANT SOLENOPSIS GIGANTICUS

FIRST SEEN: Them! (1954)

APPEARANCE: Erm, a bit like ants, but bigger.
SIZE: Mutated into eight-foot long monsters by atomic bomb radiation.

TOXICITY WARNING: Each holds enough formic acid to take down a small army.

BEHAVIOURAL PATTERNS: Like any other ant, they'll find a secluded spot to create a nest. Only these critters will also kidnap young children and hold them hostage there.

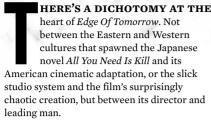
NATURAL ENEMIES: Giant kettles filled with gallons of boiling water.

THE HOST GOEMUL AMPHIBICUS

FIRST SEEN: The Host (2006)
APPEARANCE: A mutated tadpole that means business.
SIZE: The length of a small bus (and about ten times as fast).
NATURAL HABITAT: The Han River, South Korea.
DIET: Almost anything that's

thrown in the water. Including human beings.

TOXICITY WARNING: As the product of illegal dumping of formaldehyde in the sewers, it hosts a deadly virus that infects anyone it bites. Ruddy scientists.



Doug Liman has been making movies with an indie sensibility on an increasingly grand scale his entire career, an endeavour which he claims was actually helped by working with one of the world's biggest movie stars.

"It's great to have both perspectives represented in the room," Liman tells *SFX* during the final few months of post-production on his temporal action romance. "Tom is worried about how the moment's going to play when it's translated into Japanese and I'm worried how it's going to play for the 50-strong art-house crowd in Williamsburg."

It's worrying about Williamsburg cineastes that has made Liman one of Hollywood's most intriguing mainstream directors and *Edge Of Tomorrow*, potentially, one of the summer's least formulaic blockbusters.

"I don't crave the big-set experience,"
Liman says. "My favourite experiences on *Edge Of Tomorrow* were the reshoots I did with Tom where I had a greenscreen set up in the editing room and we would secretly sneak some lights in, because it was totally unauthorised. The thing I'm most proud of with *Edge Of Tomorrow* is that the whole film feels like it was shot that way, even though it was a crew of thousands and a massive budget. It feels like a really personal story."

Adapted from Hiroshi Sakurazaka's novel, Edge Of Tomorrow is the story of Cruise's Bill Cage – a soldier who, after an encounter with a Mimic (the film's alien invaders), finds himself flung back in time to the day before a devastating battle whenever he is killed. It doesn't sound like a film made for the art







got so far ahead of the screenplay that many of the movie's scenes were storyboarded before a single word was written for them. The less than ideal route *Edge Of Tomorrow* took to the screen would set warning bells ringing if Liman didn't thrive on uncertainty.

"When I met with Tom I didn't have the story," Liman confides. "I had a sense of the characters and I had the tone and that was it. And that's what Tom signed on to. When we started work with Tom he said: 'Well, we're obviously not making this film. I like the idea but we're going to have to rewrite the whole thing.' I thought, 'there's nothing like a looming start date to force you to get the script in place'. But then we started shooting and the script still wasn't there and then it was, 'there's nothing like a looming end of shooting date to make sure you get the script right'. And then we still didn't have it. And it was like, 'there's nothing like the looming end of editing to make sure you get the script right!"

One scene in place from the earliest stages was the epic beach battle – the focal point for

the film's time loop. Think Saving Private Ryan's D-Day landing but with mech-suit-sporting soldiers fighting tentacled biomechanical ETs. The 20 or so minutes SFX is shown is a thrilling blend of anarchy, eye candy and dark humour (which the trailers to date have drastically undersold). Like many of Hollywood's biggest films nowadays the battle scenes, and much of the movie, were shot in the UK

"It was by far the most complicated scene I've ever shot. We woefully underestimated how hard it was going to be," Liman says. "Originally we were going to shoot it at Slapton Sands. We had two weeks of filming there but because of the weather we made the decision to build the whole beach on the back lot of Leavesden Studios. It was a good thing we did that because it wasn't two weeks of shooting, it was more like six weeks. When we

came to shoot the last thing on the beach it was covered in snow and my line producer turned to me and said: 'I think mother nature is telling us to stop shooting the beach!'"

SUITED UP

Integral to the battle are the film's distinctive exo-suits – weaponised armour that helps level the playing field with the Mimics. Far from simply designing them to look cool on camera, Liman and his team put a great deal of thought into the exo-suits, stopping one step short of constructing working models. "I come from a practical point of view," says Liman. "First we studied real suits of armour being researched at places like DARPA. We thought about every detail and ultimately built, basically, functioning exo-suits. They weren't hydraulically powered, although it was my



fantasy during editing I was going to take one of the suits and power it up."

The beach battle may be the scene that sells Edge Of Tomorrow to the masses, but the story doesn't stop once Cage learns exactly how to make it off the battlefield intact. "There's a section where there's a bunch of repeats, and then there's a massive chunk of the movie where they don't repeat and they make a huge amount of progress. And so you end up having these stakes where you don't want him to die because he'd have to go back and redo all that he's accomplished," Liman explains. "That said, we always found ways to do things differently, so it never feels repetitive. That's one of the things I'm most proud of in the film, given that it is the same day over and over again - there isn't a moment that drags.'

Doing things differently could be the film's mantra. It may not look like it, but for Liman

Edge Of Tomorrow is a film locked in a battle between mainstream and art-house audiences, something he believes will ensure it appeals to everyone.

"I was talking to a close friend when I started on this and she was like, 'You're selling out?' But the reality is she's going to be like, 'You did a film with Tom Cruise, aliens and time travel and it's as personal and unique as *Swingers*. How did you pull that off?' In a way this is my greatest achievement. Somehow I went into the belly of the beast and the end result couldn't be more original. We're the counter-programming this summer."

Edge Of Tomorrow is released in UK cinemas on Friday 30 May.

CRUISE CONTROL

Doug Liman on working with the world's biggest movie star

"Our first day of shooting, we were doing a scene where the squad is jogging across and Bill Paxton is their drill sergeant. They're at Heathrow Airport, which has been turned into a military base, so we built a massive section with three gates, and you know how long it takes to walk three gates. We had to use PA system because there's no way they could hear us to say cut. But Tom's got a wireless microphone on and I hear him say to the

rest of the squad, Bill Paxton, eight actors and maybe 50 extras, 'i'm a 50-yearold man, see if you can keep up with me.' And then he runs back to the starting position and gets

everyone racing him.
He was beaten by
at least one of the
extras who was like
18. And suddenly
Tom's got everyone back

to shoot in literally a minute.

"It set a tone from the beginning of 'let's not waste a second'. So from that moment on, if I had to go to the bathroom I ran. Physically ran. The fact it happened on day one set such a great tone for the production. That commitment, that shows up in every performance. That shows up in every face you see on screen."

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Steampunk

The Couch team enters a world decked out in goggles and impressive facial hair

n this world of microchips, electricity and internal combustion engines, the steam power that drove the industrial revolution has been as good as forgotten. We set out to fix that one April afternoon as Dave B, Rich, Nick, Ade, Jordan and Jordan's girlfriend Bridie assembled for an afternoon of steam-

powered action.

You could almost feel the heat and smell the coal as we embarked on a steampunk odyssey, sifting through the clichés, admiring retrofuturistic technology that never existed but probably should have, and working hard to answer the most pertinent question of the day - what actually is steampunk? So, goggles on, facial hair primped appropriately and airship moored. Can someone put the kettle on?

Wild Wild West (1999)

Will Smith and director **Barry Sonnenfeld** reunite in an attempt to relocate that Men In Black magic to the American West. Unfortunately, the film is

to Men In Black as Days Of Thunder is to Top Gun... RICH: I can't get Will Smith's theme

song out of my head!

NICK: Does anyone have any memories of the original show? Does this have any cultural resonance over here? Did it even air in Britain?

RICH: It might have been on briefly in the '60s, but I'm not sure anyone remembers. NICK: The original show was inspired by Bond. They were mashing together the Western, the most

popular genre, with spies, the second most popular.

DAVE: Was the original series steampunk?

NICK: Can you call anything that was made in the '60s steampunk? ADE: Who originally coined the

DAVE: I think it was Bruce Sterling and William Gibson who wrote The Difference Engine in 1990. That's largely thought of as the novel that brought the genre into public consciousness. But I don't think anyone went to see Wild Wild West and thought "steampunk!"

RICH: I don't think anyone saw this! JORDAN: They could have used the term "steamflunk".

General "Bloodbath" McGrath empties some wax out of his gramophone speaker-style ear trumpet. Nice.

DAVE: The body modification of that ear trumpet – and Kenneth

COUCH POTATO



Branagh's wheelchair later on – is very steampunk.

BRIDIE: But is it enough to just have gadgets in a historical setting? RICH: People had been using old stuff in a futuristic way before this - like in Back To The Future III. ADE: We haven't seen a single set of goggles yet. We need goggles! **Heroic US Marshals James West** (Will Smith) and Artemus Gordon (Kevin Kline) head back to Washington DC to meet President Ulysses S Grant (also Kevin Kline). RICH: Has Kevin Kline had a decent role since A Fish Called Wanda? DAVE: Dave was okay. And good practice for playing the Prez. RICH: And for playing two roles.

"At the time you never thought these effects would look dated, but they do now"

NICK: I'm not sure I'd want to be the President with Will Smith around. It's not always good for the White House's insurance.

DAVE: Here are some other steampunk tropes that this doesn't fulfil. When I think of steampunk I think of Victorian England and fog.

JORDAN: You've got to give it a bit of leeway. If you have too many criteria nothing will ever fit into any genre!

DAVE: There is a lot of steam.

West and Gordon make their way to their pimped-up steam train.

BRIDIE: Goggles spotted! The man on the bike had eyewear.

NICK: This is lifted from the TV show. They had a train that took





them across America.

RICH: Just think of the timescale the show must have taken place over if they had to drive across the US on a train every week. "We will save you, Mr President – some time over the next month or so..."

After plenty of gags that don't hit

the mark, questionable attempts to find the funny side in a lynching, and half-baked action sequences, we get to the bit we've been waiting for - the giant, steampowered mechanical spider. **DAVE:** It's a great visual, isn't it. NICK: You can't beat a giant spider. It's got a kind of Meccano vibe to it. JORDAN: There's quite a funny story behind it. Kevin Smith wrote the script for Superman Reborn - the one Tim Burton was directing with Nicolas Cage as Supes. All the producer, Jon Peters, wanted was Superman to fight a giant spider. Smith said no, and had nothing to do with Peters for years. Then Peters is one of the producers on Wild Wild West, Smith is watching it and a giant spider appears at the end. So Jon Peters is presumably to thank for the giant mechanical spider. As Kenneth Branagh's steampowered civil war vet Arliss Loveless tries to get the United States to surrender to his Loveless Alliance, West and Gordon take to

RICH: Were the Loveless Alliance a '70s funk band?

the skies.

DAVE: They've both got goggles.
The goggle count is now three.
NICK: Isn't it odd how this looks like it's 1999. At the time you never thought these effects would look dated, but they do now.
RICH: So when will Avengers and Man Of Steel start to age?

Man Of Steel start to age?
NICK: There'll be people in 50 years pissing themselves at The Avengers and Man Of Steel.







The League Of Extraordinary Gentlemen (2003)



Now it's time for an infamous turkey, the big-screen adaptation of Alan Moore and

Kevin O'Neill's classic graphic novel about a team of literary heroes uniting to save Victorian England from peril.

RICH: It's the film that killed
Stephen Norrington's career.
NICK: And Sean Connery hasn't
appeared in anything since.
RICH: So is this as bad as people
make out, or one of those films that's
simply got a bad reputation?
NICK: If you've read the original
graphic novel, it's terrible.

JORDAN: I haven't read the original,
and I think it's okay.

NICK: This is so dumbed down and silly where the original is so textured. And it never convinces as Victorian London – it's all filmed in Prague and it looks like Prague.

We travel to Africa to find Connery's Allan Quatermain... NICK: Allan Quatermain was the

proto-Indiana Jones and obviously Connery played Indy's dad. There's a weird lineage.

ADE: He still pretty much looks the same here as he did in *Indy*.

NICK: He's possibly younger here than Harrison Ford will be if he plays Indy again.

Back to London now to meet the rest of the team: Captain Nemo, Mina Harker, the Invisible Man, Dorian Gray and, er, Tom Sawyer. NICK: Isn't it funny how none of these characters get a proper entrance. They're just thrown into a room together. It's bungled.

DAVE: Sorry, but Tom Sawyer does not fit with the other literary characters here. If you have Sawyer you might as well have White Fang. RICH: What's Dorian Gray's power? NICK: Beauty and immortality. BRIDIE: Until he looks at his picture... JORDAN: ...that's conveniently located at the location of the final showdown.

RICH: Does that count as a power?
BRIDIE: Mina shouldn't be a
vampire any more, because Dracula
is dead.

RICH: Maybe she squeezed this in between chapters of the book?

BRIDIE: Dracula is done in letters, so you know the dates. She couldn't have done it.

The team meet Mr Hyde - "He

looks like he's made of sausages," says Nick – on board Nemo's gigantic Nautilus submarine. Which bizarrely can squeeze itself through the canals of Venice.

NICK: Like that would fit in a canal.

JORDAN: The approach to vehicles in this is weird. Things like the tank and the cars were only about a decade away from being invented in 1899, when the film's set. Is this really steampunk?

ADE: It's petrol punk?
RICH: Also, if cars haven't been properly invented yet, how does
Tom Sawyer know how to use a clutch and pedals?

BRIDIE: Maybe he's been test driving around the Nautlius. **JORDAN:** This isn't steampunk, it's just anachronistic.

NICK: Anacrononism in the UK. RICH: Or Prague.









Not to be confused with Nine, the Daniel **Day-Lewis-starring** musical of the same

year, this Tim Burton-produced CG movie is set in a dystopian world populated by little people made of sack cloth...

JORDAN: Didn't they call this stitchpunk when it came out? RICH: It's got the steampunk vibe. It's like their heads, with those big eyes, are made of concentrated steampunk.

DAVE: The goggle count is already high.

Next to the body of a dead human scientist, 9 comes to life - though he's not quite finished, and he needs to do up his zip.

NICK: He's flying low. JORDAN: His entire insides are exposed.

DAVE: Everything about this world is old. Maybe the apocalypse happened when they still had vintage cars.

RICH: Or maybe they're in a theme park recreating the 1940s? NICK: Rust is quite steampunk, isn't it?

JORDAN: This might be the first film where there's no impressive facial hair.

NICK: Impressive knitting, though. Despite its visual style, the Couchers are starting to doubt 9's steampunk credentials...

RICH: It's an impostor dressed in steampunk clothing. The characters have an interesting aesthetic, but they're not steam-powered - they run on electronics.

DAVE: I heard Will Self being interviewed and he described Blade Runner as steampunk.

JORDAN: Maybe he was confusing it with cyberpunk.

DAVE: I'm going to try a new phrase. "Trash punk". Everything is found, isn't it?

ADE: Hang on a sec, this is steampunk now. Those Gatling guns are incredibly steampunk.

Time for a montage of premicrochip machines taking over the world - and making sure the humans are dead. Every last one. Turns out that the dead human scientist had worked out how to put portions of a soul inside these little sack people.

NICK: Oh god. Knitted puppets. Is that all we've got to look forward to? ADE: I think if you're a child you'd be terrified by this.

BRIDIE: I think if you were a little stitch man you'd be terrified by this. JORDAN: Can they feel pain or what? Do they breathe? Are they really alive?

NICK: These are deep philosophical questions.

RICH: And if they're all that's left of the human race, how do they reproduce?

NICK: They can knit. Crafting is the

In order to save the planet, one of the little sack people sacrifices his life force to a mysterious talisman. **BRIDIE:** Is that a concentrated blast of soul power?

NICK: Isaac Hayes, soul power.

Some dead sack people come back in transparent, non-corporeal form. **NICK:** It's like the end of *Return Of* The Jedi.

BRIDIE: Why do they still look like sack people and not the human who provided the original souls? JORDAN: There's a director's cut where one of them is replaced with

Hayden Christensen.

NICK: They all look like Gerald Kaufman - if anyone remembers him. **DAVE:** This is where they join forces into some kind of anime attack force.







Steamboy (2004)



If there were any doubts about the steampunk credentials of some of the previous

movies, there's no question about Steamboy. It's set in an alternative Victorian Manchester, where steam power can do pretty much anything you want it to - hell, it's even got "steam" in the title.

NICK: There's lots of cogs. And the colour palette is very steampunk. RICH: I wonder how many people have heard of Manchester in Japan. NICK: I'd love it if there was a Victorian Inspiral Carpets or a Happy Mondays.

JORDAN: This looks like it could have been directed by Ridley Scott. DAVE: It does feel like an authentically British piece of Victoriana.

RICH: Those houses look like they could be off Coronation Street. NICK: I think that was the back of Ena Sharples's place.

RICH: You do feel like every single frame has been painted individually. NICK: By robots.

RICH: But it's beautiful. NICK: It is beautiful. They're very talented robots.

JORDAN: There's lots of trains. Trains are the great steampunk vision. **NICK:** They were the first great tech. We could have had robots, but we had trains.

DAVE: Or mechanical spiders. JORDAN: There's a parallel universe where everybody rides around on steam spiders instead of cars. **DAVE:** Airship sighted! NICK: Should we have made this a drinking game? Down a shot whenever a steampunk cliché is seen.



ADE: I don't think we'd come out of this film alive.

We're all agreed Steamboy looks amazing, but we've got a few issues with the accents - not least Anna Paquin playing hero James Steam. BRIDIE: His accent's changed a few times. Not sure where he's from. RICH: He keeps leaping back and forth across the Pennines. NICK: I think that's Welsh now, isn't it?

RICH: Ladies and gentlemen, Anna Paquin, Oscar-winner!

The action moves to London, for a finale involving Tower Bridge, the Crystal Palace, submarines and... **DAVE:** That's what steampunk stormtroopers would look like.

NICK: Has that been done before? RICH: Lots of times. Kroenen in Hellboy's like a steampunk stormtrooper.

Ade takes exception to an anime character's eccentric barnet.

ADE: Get your hair cut, you silly sod! RICH: Ade, are you abusing a cartoon character?

ADE: Those guys are clearly stormtroopers. They can't shoot. DAVE: This is all great and everything, but I do have a problem with it. At least Wild Wild West, in its clumsy way, addressed the fact that its world was based on slavery and other bad stuff. This just focuses on the exciting results of the industrial revolution, ignoring any negative aspects of empire that led to it.

RICH: But is this the most steampunk movie ever made? JORDAN: Goggles, facial hair, steam, giant machines... I think you'd have to go a long way to find anything that beats it. 520





Charlaine Harris

Round about Midnight... Sookie's creator tells us about her new sequence

• WORDS BY JONATHAN WRIGHT • PORTRAIT BY ROB MONK

ometimes you have to reverse into the future. In 2013, the last of Charlaine Harris's hugely successful Southern Vampire Mysteries, starring telepathic waitress Sookie Stackhouse, was published. But what to do next? Harris began to look back at her own life.

"I just needed to cleanse my palate of the whole Sookie experience, which was wonderful in most ways, but I just felt it was time for me to stretch in another direction," she says. "So I called on a different part of my background, my memories of my childhood when I would go to stay in Texas every summer with my grandparents, who ran a hotel in a tiny little town called Rock Springs.'

The first result of this time travelling is the hugely anticipated Midnight Crossroad, the opening novel in a new sequence. As

Harris's words suggest, it's a book where the smalltown atmospherics are far removed from the gothic gumbo of Sookie's Louisiana world. Midnight, Texas, is desolate, isolated, an arid place.

It's also vividly drawn, perhaps because Mississippi Delta-raised Harris herself has such clear memories of her trips west as a child, trips that coincided with the hotel being at its busiest because it was rodeo time. "I felt culture shock every summer." she says, her melodious southern accent suddenly a particular reminder of her roots. "The people in Texas were much more direct and laconic." Then there was the fact Harris always got ill: "I don't know if it was psychological or just plain bad luck, but every summer I would catch something different

So who would live in such a place? Again, Harris looked back, this time at her own writing career. Midnight Crossroad is in part peopled with characters who have previously

featured in her books. The proprietor of Midnight Pawn, Bobo Winthrope, for example, first showed up as a high school and college student in Harris's Lily Bard books, a quintet of mysteries that kicked off in 1996 with Shakespeare's Landlord. The disappearance of Bobo's girlfriend provides Midnight Crossroad with its plot.

Elsewhere, "online psychic" Manfred Bernardo featured in the Harper Connelly books; the local sheriff is Arthur Smith, from the Aurora Teagarden mysteries: while the second Midnight novel will feature were-tiger John Quinn from the Sookie books. What unites these figures, says Harris, is that she "felt a special connection" when she wrote about them. More than this, she wanted to know what happened to them.

But will fans think the same? Harris did, after all, have to cope with online abuse from readers unhappy at how the final Sookie novel, Dead Ever After, ended. Things got so bad Harris opted not to go out on tour to promote the book. Besides, whatever an author says, some fans will always pine

"I know that having to wait for success made me a better person"

and wheedle for just one more novel in a much-loved sequence.

"That's flattering," she says. "And of course I went through my own travails at the end of the Sookie series with a lot of hating going on, but I think I've put that in my rear-view mirror and I'm proceeding forward. People will like [Midnight Crossroad] or they won't, it's the book I wanted to write and I hope people will enjoy it."

In other words, Harris has already moved on, although she did take the time to co-edit a collection of short stories, After Dead: What Came Next In The World Of Sookie Stackhouse, a project initially available as an audio book, and which showcases the work of fellow writers who are Sookie fans. "To me it was kind of embarrassing, thinking of asking writers, 'Did you actually read all my books?'" she says. "It's like asking someone out on a date when you're not sure they'll say yes or not." Maybe so, but nobody Harris approached turned her down.

Then of course there's Alan Ball's True Blood, about to enter its seventh and final season. In Harris's view, books and series long ago became "separate entertainment experiences". That's not a criticism. She's at pains to emphasise her "respect for everyone that worked on the show, tremendous respect".

If all this suggests a level-headed attitude towards success, it's in part because it took Harris, now a grandmother, so long to make a good living as a writer. "I know that having to wait for success made me a better person and a better writer," she says.

What does she mean by a better person? "I don't take anything for granted," she replies. "I don't take the money for granted, I don't take the deference for granted, I don't take any of that for granted. I enjoy

it and I'm proud that I worked hard enough to achieve it."

And maybe because she came up the hard way, she's understanding when fans get so excited to meet her. "There are writers I have to restrain myself from going [adopts excitable voice], 'I just love you, I love everything you've ever written.' I have to restrain myself from doing the same thing cos I'm such a fan too. But sometimes people get so overwhelmed that they start crying, and that's uncomfortable for me."

How does one react to such a strange social situation? "Usually I hug'em," laughs Charlaine Harris.

HARLAINE

Midnight Crossroad

Midnight Crossroad will be published on Thursday 8 May.

CIODATA

- **OCCUPATION:** Novelist
- **BORN:** 1951
- FROM: Tunica, Mississippi
- **GREATEST HITS:** The Southern Vampire Mysteries became international hits, despite the fact the first novel was initially rejected by publishers.
- **RANDOM FACT:** Harris has lately been cowriting the Cemetery Girl graphic novels with Christopher Golden.





THE STORY BEHIND THE SF AND FANTASY OF YESTERYEAR

1 9 9 2

Calum Waddell looks back at Alien 3, one of the most infamously troubled threequels in sci-fi cinema...

Y ALL ACCOUNTS, ALIEN 3 SHOULD HAVE been one of the most successful sequels of all time. At the close of 1986's rip-roaring Aliens, Sigourney Weaver's Ripley, having defeated her interplanetary acid-blooded adversaries, retreated into a space pod bound for Earth accompanied by her compatriots Bishop, Hicks and Newt. All four characters were (seemingly) put into a very safe cybersleep. The next instalment, one assumed, would pick up shortly thereafter - with the fabulous foursome awake, and in fresh surroundings, pitted against a new horde of hot-tempered Xenomorph menace.

Unfortunately, it was not to be.

With ex-music video helmer David Fincher opting to take the franchise in an unexpectedly dark and dingy direction with a plot detailing Ripley's struggle for survival on an inauspicious all-male prison-world - 1992's would-be summer blockbuster, Alien 3, was not what anyone expected. Highlighting just one solitary space-beast, and a group of gun-less victims, the often-meandering movie could not be further removed from the "gung-ho", blood-pumping bullet ballet that propelled its immediate predecessor into a pop culture phenomenon.

Moreover, with Ripley's group massacred during a crashlanding, Alien 3 tied itself into a "one-woman" show - although even sci-fi's most formidable female, who finds herself impregnated with a stomach-burster of her own, would fail to make it to the end of the claustrophobic epic. Talk about conclusive. And depressing.

Of course, Alien 3 is also well known for its behind-the-scenes battles and its rushed production schedule. Fincher himself was not even the studio's first choice as director - Renny Harlin was

originally attached (he quit to make *Die Hard* 2 instead) and Ridley Scott was offered the opportunity to make a return (in retrospect, it probably would have been a better option than Prometheus). Numerous script rewrites later and

"We had some 'philosophical differences' over the series

Fincher was finally brought onboard with, reportedly, only five weeks of prep time.

Initially, the plan was to concentrate on Michael Biehn's Hicks character - with Weaver taking a back seat to the action. When this idea was scrapped, later screenplays were commissioned - including an aliens-on-Earth option courtesy of Eric Red (who had penned the popular vampire potboiler Near Dark) to the now-legendary wooden-monastery planet take instigated by Vincent Ward (who obtained a credit for "story" on the final flick). Finally, though, original Alien creators Walter Hill and David Giler were brought in, alongside Highlander scripter Larry Ferguson, to form the film that became Alien 3 - although Fincher and his own pen-man, Rex Pickett, would do a further rejig as shooting was about to commence.

"My friend and partner, David Giler, and I worked on the story for Alien 3," states Hill when SFX catches up with him. "But let's just say that we had some 'philosophical differences' in regards to how the series was being developed. Since Alien 3 we have had no connection to the franchise outwith being credited as creating the characters." →







At least one thing *Alien 3* does have in its favour is a strong cast of reliable British thespians – including Brian Glover, future Doctor Who Paul McGann and Charles Dance, who is quick to admit that the making of the movie was a less-than-pleasurable experience...

"Well, look, it wasn't a nightmare, despite what you may have read or heard elsewhere," begins Dance when SFX sits down with him. "But it certainly wasn't an easy shoot. What was on the screen was quite removed from what was in the script. But, with that said, I don't regret that I was a part of it. I mean, I knew going into Alien 3 that this was a big franchise picture – and there are a lot of cooks in the kitchen on these things."

RIPLEY'S MATE

As well as the lack of firepower, and the minimalist approach to both story and surroundings, another unique element of *Alien 3* comes from the fact that Ripley is offered a love interest – in the form of Dance's attractively accented medical doctor Clemens.

Frequently forgotten about in various retrospectives on *Alien 3* is the fact that this is the sole entry in the series in which Weaver actually gets to become carnally involved with a member of the opposite sex. Alas, effectively adding to the feature's downbeat dystopia, even Dance is destroyed midway into the movie – falling prey, post-coitus no less, to the toothy title terror.

"I did think it was a pity that the only character Ripley ever had any kind of relationship with was killed off a little bit early," reflects the actor. "It was not very fair. I would have liked to have stayed alive for a bit longer. However, film is a director's medium, not an actor's medium. It's up to me to make the movie that the director wants. Now, and I need to stress this, any problems I had with the making of *Alien 3* had nothing to do with David Fincher. In fact, the minute David Fincher first walked onto the set I thought, 'My god, this guy is going to go far.' He was fantastic – and I hope that I get to work with David again at some point. He was dealing with a lot of outside interference on that movie."

Nevertheless, at least one thing was evident as shooting on *Alien 3* got underway – this was *not* going to be the sort of special effects laden supernova that *Aliens* had been.

WHAT FINCHER THINKS

Beginning his career working at ILM, Fincher found his calling as part of the MTV generation, directing music videos for the likes of Madonna (including "Express Yourself" and "Vogue") and Michael Jackson (for "Who Is It?"). At 28 years of age, Alien 3 was his first feature film – although Fincher has since gone on record to admit that, "No one hated it more than me." In a recent interview with BBC journalist Mark Burman, the filmmaker opened up further, revealing that, "I think audiences find it pretentious and ponderous and resent the fact it's not a scary-scare movie. It's a queasy-scare movie." In other words: that long dreamed-of Alien 3 Blu-ray with Fincher commentary track is going to have to wait.

"I was pleased with that actually," admits Dance. "I didn't go back and watch the other two films before *Alien 3* – however, I did see *Alien* when it first came out and I remembered it fondly. On the other hand, I didn't think *Aliens* was very good. To me, it was not a very good story – it was just a lot of people firing guns all over the place. What got me excited about the third film was that they toned that down. But what ended up on the screen was a different animal than what was on the page."

For some, part of the interest of the *Alien* franchise comes from the underlying elements of maternal malevolence and gender-subversion, from a male giving birth to the penetrative-parent alien. You can see *Alien 3* as extending these intriguing elements, with Ripley forced to dominate a group of males, and in the process masculinising herself (witness that shaved head), before dying in the midst of giving birth to a beast that she, understandably, does not want to introduce to the world.

According to Hill, though, giving too much Freudian thought to this tale of torrid parentage is best approached with caution.

"You would really need to explain some of that stuff to me," he chuckles. "Listen, I once made a wise ass remark. It was about 25 years ago and I have never had so many letters in my life. I said something about psychoanalysis – basically that it is astrology for intellectuals, and I got about 200 letters scolding me. Everybody has to make a living, though, and some people have obviously decided they can make living out of writing that stuff on the *Alien* films. But that is not the business I am in. All I know is that we just wanted to make good scary movies. Maybe some stuff got snuck in there without me realising – who knows?"

Regardless of one's take on *Alien 3*, when the troubled extraterrestrial opus wrapped (with Fincher disassociating himself from the final product and



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choosing not to involve himself in the postproduction) it had to be obvious to the series' studio, Fox, that this eagerly anticipated third offering was not going to be an audience pleaser.

"I was, and am, surprised that the franchise kept going"

"I didn't honestly think about that," shrugs Dance.

"That is up to other people to consider. I had no idea how people who loved Aliens would receive it. I did go and see Alien 3 at the cinema when it came out and I thought it was okay. Yeah, it was okay. I have never gone back and watched it again but I have heard about the 'longer' version that is now out there. I can't comment on that, though, because I never saw it."

BAD RESPONSE

Indeed, despite a frosty fan reaction, Alien 3 has since gone on to be seen, by some, as a fittingly fiery end to the franchise - to the extent that a reassembled, and decidedly superior, "director's cut" was later offered to fans as an accompaniment to the theatrical version (unfortunately Fincher refused to be involved). Furthermore, as time has passed, one does need to question what the alternative to the Alien 3 we now know (and perhaps love) would have been: a Ripley and co romp in which Weaver and pals are pitted against sundry space-fiends in sequel after sequel? A "teenage angst" tale focusing on the pubertyperils of Newt? A cloned Ripley who can shoot basketballs with the best of them and breed out alien offspring?

Oh hang on, they tried that...

"I was, and am, surprised that the franchise kept going," admits Hill. "When we did Alien all we wanted to do was to bring a more sophisticated style of filmmaking to what had always been regarded as a B-picture. I always thought that if you did that you would have a commercially rewarding endeavour. But who knew that approach would lead to the Hollywood you have now, where more serious dramatic films have been squeezed out by that B-movie approach. The fact that our monster movie contributed to the loss of a wider approach to filmmaking is, in a way, quite sad."

Such a pessimistic statement seems entirely fitting for a feature on sci-fi's most famous feelbad follow-up. Even so, we would wager that few would argue that, in the grand scale of studio sequels, it's unlikely that anyone will ever again dare to destroy a potent celluloid property like David Fincher did with

For that reason alone, we can but admire the decisions however mad - that led to this most unlikely of threequels.



ALIEN RESURRECT

After the ending of Alien 3 it's probably safe to assume that a Ripley comeback looked about as likely as a new Charlton Heston-fronted Planet Of The Apes instalment. Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, 1997's Alien Resurrection went for the route of high farce in its attempt to bring back a more comic book version of Ripley, complete with Xenomorph blood and superhuman physical abilities. According to the movie's director, the French art house auteur Jean-Pierre Jeunet, he may have gone a little bit too far: "When I last saw the movie, I thought to myself, 'Oh no, no, no - you put in far too many jokes. It is too



much. You did not know when to stop!" he laughs to SFX. "It was supposed to be scary, wasn't it? But I suppose you have to do your own thing. I like the word 'quirky' and I like to hear that my films are 'quirky' ... I guess if you were to ask me to describe my approach to that movie I would say that Alien Resurrection was 'quirky'.'

PENNY DREADFUL

What's happening in the world of horror movies this month...



This month I'm thinking about newness vs oldness. They say there's nothing new under the sun but I can count on one hand the number of serial killer movies I've seen with

Ryan Reynolds and a talking cat. Blair Witch Bigfoot riff Willow Creek isn't bad and there's the new Scream TV show - life in old Ghostface vet? Maybe...



About this talking cat then... The Voices, directed by Persepolis helmer and comic artist Marjane Satrapi, and staring Ryan Reynolds as a disturbed man who accidentally kills his co-worker and becomes a mass murderer at the behest of his Scottish ginger Tom (voiced by Reynolds), against the wishes of his republican dog (also voiced by Reynolds), is nothing if not original. Tripping between genres - comedy, drama, horror, errr... musical, with Gemma Arterton co-starring as a severed head, Satrapi's film is explosive with inventiveness. Cards on the table: I didn't actually love this movie as much as I hoped I might. After the heady start and one

terrific gut punch moment where reality suddenly invades psychotic fantasy, it's a bit of a mess that doesn't amount to much. But see it anyway for its audaciousness and the credit sequence song and dance routine...

GLASS AND A HALF

Ambrose Bierce said a novel is "a short story padded". Oculus, the new film from Mike Flanagan, who made 2011's creepy and mythical indie Absentia, is a short film turned into a feature. But padded it is not. Weaving the story of "The Lasser Glass" - a mirror which seems to be linked to multiple deaths spanning centuries - via dual interlocking time lines -Oculus is ambitious and ambiguous and cleverly different. Karen Gillan plays Kaylie, sister of Tim,

his 21st birthday. Meanwhile Katee Sackoff plays Marie, mother of Tim and Kaylie in scenes from back before Tim was sent away. Past and present merge and perceptions shift as the mirror messes more and more with Kaylie and Tim's minds (or does it ...?). Though the feature isn't as purely terrifying as the short (fun fact: this was the first DVD box I ever had a quote on, something about weeing myself in broad daylight), what I love is that it's not quite a possession movie, nor a haunted houser, it's not a mock doc and nor is it a ghost story, though it uses bits and pieces from all these subgenres to create something else.

DON'T GO INTO THE WOODS. PLEASE

My tolerance is high but I'm very close to being totally finished with found footage. The next time I hear the phrase "it's the same tree we passed three hours ago!" I'm going to go on a rampage where I hunt down all wannabe documentary makers who think they might go to the woods to investigate a witch/ghost/wolfman/goatman/

murder them. On camera. In HD on a freakin' tripod... So to Willow Creek (which actually does contain the offending line), where it's a Bigfoot the ill-fated docu-bothers are hunting, at the site where the infamous Patterson-Gimlin video was shot. I didn't hate this because: 1) Alexie Gilmore and Bryce Johnson were surprisingly unhateful for the genre and can act. 2) Bobcat Goldthwait, who's better known for comedy, directs, and some of it is a bit funny. 3) There's an intense 19-minute static shot in a tent (but really, it's not that different from BWP). 4) The end freaked me out. So okay, Willow Creek, you can have a pass. But please, no more! No more!



SHOW RUNNER

Scream, as I have frequently said, is brilliant. On the subject of "newness" it ushered in a whole refreshed era for the slasher film, reinvented the final girl, and okay, spawned a bunch of super-smug rip-offs. It made stalk 'n' slash fun again. But that was back in 1996 and since then we've had Tucker & Dale (which is getting a sequel btw!) and Cabin



Penny's monthly dictionary of doom

C IS FOR... CANNIBALS

Notorious for the real

animal violence and the trial that followed,



suggesting the director had actually killed actors on set, this movie, of a documentary crew travelling to the Amazon to film indigenous tribes, nonetheless stands on its own merits. Intelligent and shocking, but only for the strong of stomach.

A "family" living next to Heathrow Airport abduct and induct "children" into their dysfunctional cannibal clan. It's summed up by one breakfast scene:



Mum and Dad and two kids have brekkie in front of a small telly and talk about the day ahead. Only the "kids" are tied up, breakfast is human entrails and it's hardcore porn on screen...

Ridley Scott, 2001

Not the greatest of the Lecter movies but the most exemplary when it comes to cannibalism, Ridley Scott's film features freakish Mason Verger and



his ravenous killer pigs as well as that delicious live lobotomy scene, where Hannibal feeds Ray Liotta's corrupt official parts of his own brain. Not with a nice Chianti though...

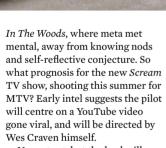
Fruit Chan, 2004

Age is literally devouring youth in Fruit Chan's allegorical shocker. Bai Ling is Mei, the cook, who whips up mythical snacks which contain properties



of eternal youth, coveted by the rich women of Hong Kong. But what's in them? Social commentary meets visceral body horror - gorgeous and disgusting.

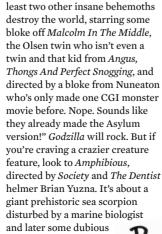




No cast yet, but the lead will be "artsy loner" Audrey, caught in the middle of a murder and the town's murky history, while the series, like the films, will focus on the rules of the genre. Perhaps they'll go super-meta and explore the "rules" of the successful, longrunning TV show? In which case expect a lot of shagging (Audrey is described as "the bi-curious daughter of a Lutheran pastor" so that bodes well), movie references, expendable main characters, crystal meth and a dragon.

GODS AND MONSTERS

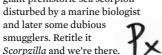
While *Godzilla* is rampaging through the box office and we're all rediscovering Ghidora, Destroyah and MechaGodzilla, spare a thought for The Asylum, who for once seem to have thrown their hands in the air and said



smugglers. Retitle it

"a 350ft mutant monster plus at

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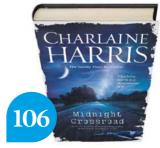
Hemlock Grove Season One

Bromance, corpse kissing and eyepopping gore all feature in Netflix's bizarre werewolf murder mystery series.



Studio Ghibl

Three more films from the renowned Japanese animation studio hit Blu-ray - including classic *Princess Mononoke*.



Midnight Crossroad

The first in Sookie Stackhouse creator Charlaine Harris's new series introduces us to a quirky hamlet.

Rated

The Amazing Spider-Man 2

A tangled web

Release Date: OUT NOW!

12A | 141 minutes Distributor: Sony Pictures Director: Marc Webb

Cast: Andrew Garfield, Emma Stone, Jamie Foxx, Dane DeHaan, Campbell Scott, Sally Field, Paul Giamatti

IT'S JUST NOT PETER

Parker's day. But when is it? In this seguel to the 2012 reboot, Andrew Garfield's arachnid-affected youth has problems with his love life, worries about his late parents, difficulties with old pal Harry Osborn and a supervillain or three wanting to pummel his face. There's a lot going on. Which is one of the problems with this blockbuster, and yet, conversely, part of its value: like a big tin of Quality Street, it's so packed with little treats that you're bound to find something you like, even if you do have to sift through the coconut eclairs.

Sam Raimi's *Spider-Man 3* was pilloried in some quarters, a little unjustly, for having too much content, too many baddies. Perhaps Marc Webb was a fan, though, as his film builds a story of similar complexity. We begin, after a violent incident on a plane set in the past, with Spidey foiling fright-faced gangster Aleksei Sytsevich (Paul

Electro's battles with Spidey are among the high points of an uneven but gutsy movie

Giamatti) while on the way to his alter ego's graduation. When Peter finally drops in, his fellow graduate, girlfriend Gwen Stacy (Emma Stone), has just delivered a speech whose message will resonate throughout the film. But things aren't plain sailing for the bonny pair, with Peter haunted by Gwen's dead father's warning him off her.

Meanwhile, the son of Oscorp's Norman Osborn, Harry (Dane DeHaan), is back in town, thrust into a position of power which he may abuse, particularly because of a shocking discovery he makes. Then there's Max Dillon (Jamie Foxx), an electrical engineer for Oscorp, whose fragile mind is further frazzled by a rather unpleasant incident that will have health and safety fans wincing. There's also the mystery of Peter Parker's late parents, whose father may be even more important to Peter than he initially believes. And if all of that isn't enough, Aunt May (Sally Field), um, gets a job as a nurse...

Yep, The Amazing Spider-Man 2 is a hectic experience. Its jarring changes of tone make it even more so - one minute it's a romcom, the next a mystery with a dash of espionage, the next a fully-fledged superpowered slugfest with blazing pyrotechnics (with a bizarrely eclectic soundtrack to match. switching from Hans Zimmer boomings to hip-hop to, briefly, classical). But what pyrotechnics: Electro is wonderfully realised for the big screen in just the manner comic book fans have wished for, and his Big Apple battles with Spidey are among the high points of this uneven but gutsy movie. What a shame though, that Jamie Foxx is hopelessly

unable to breathe believability into the pre-transformation Dillon; his mumbling, shambling persona is a poor attempt at a muddled boffin.

Acting honours go instead to lead pair Garfield and Stone, displaying a deepening chemistry here, and in particular DeHaan as the perpetually bewitched and bothered Harry Osborn. He's very entertaining as a character on the edge – somehow, though, he's less satisfying when he's tipped over that edge.

Harry's machinations do bruising battle with the story's other elements, particularly in the film's middle act, which could have been

pared down considerably. With a running time in excess of two hours, you can expect younger members of the audience to start getting a bit twitchy around this point, especially during the "lovey-dovey" bits. You also start to question what the film is actually about. Is it a tale of vengeance? Is it a tale of thwarted love? Is it about the individual's struggle against the rest of the world? Well, probably all of these things, and you can't help but cast your mind back to Sam Raimi's more focused take on the material - as second instalments of a Spider-saga go, this is definitely weaker than





Spider-Man 2. Electro is no Dr Octopus and Garfield's Parker, smooth and likeable as he is, is not as warmly

sympathetic as Tobey Maguire's

character, a lad who strained every

sinew to be an honourable superhero.

It is, however, superior to Webb's 2012 film, thanks to its buoyant confidence and the fact that it doesn't have to tell an origin story. Humour is, crucially, never far away. Technically it's superb, with the accomplished 3D making the viewer feel like they're swinging every inch of the way across the skyscrapers with the webslinger – those with a fear of heights, consider yourselves duly warned. The intricacies

of certain action sequences dazzle, such as Spidey saving a busload of passengers from Electro's rage, or avoiding the sputtering bullets of Aleksei Sytsevich's machine gun. They must drain the budget, which is probably one of the reasons why the costumed crimefighter disappears for a good chunk of the movie halfway in!

That's one of a few surprises – some a lot bigger than others. You can't help but be disappointed by the treatment of one of the three supervillains, so heavily trailed and yet such a minor presence. It makes sense in context, but it's a little

frustrating. Similarly, why reveal in a trailer the two costumes of a certain pair of supervillains hanging on a wall? Why not save that for the movie itself?

So there are quibbles to be had with this latest addition to the Marvel universe. But you must see it. It's big, it's bold, it's a tentpole extravaganza that demands attention. And there are more than enough caramel swirls and strawberry delights in the tin to make it enjoyable. **Russell Lewin**

Daily Bugle boss J Jonah Jameson features, albeit only as the sender of an email that says, "WRONG!"

MINDPROCE •

Matt Tolmach

Producer, *The Amazing Spider-Man 2*



Were you relieved to have Spidey's origin story out of the way?

This time we were liberated to invent an enormous Spider-Man story, and to go wherever we felt the story needed to go and wanted to go. From the very beginning we just had a better, more thoughtful blueprint for the movie than we'd had on the last one.

How important is it to ground Spider-Man in the real world?

You can't just go out and create something that's so fantastical that audiences are like, "Wait, that doesn't actually fit on Madison Avenue! I would never see that!" Because then it just pulls you out of the movie. So in the case of the Rhino or Electro you're asking, "What would that look like? What would the properties of Electro's suit need to be to logically make sense?" The audience is smart, and you don't want them to cry BS, so you're having to balance real science with what's cool.

Do you feel the scrutiny of fandom when you redesign the villains?

You do, and you never want to venture too far from the spirit of the character. You're always taking into consideration who that character is, and who's in that suit. That's the stuff that fans appreciate – don't jump the shark, make it cool, make it look like today, reinvent the look and the feel of it as long as I still sense that that's the character that I've always loved. And that's the challenge. Nick Setchfield

REX FEATURES (1)

Rated



Divergent

Has its virtues

Release Date: OUT NOW!

12A | 139 minutes Distributor: Entertainment One Director: Neil Burger

Cast: Shailene Woodley, Theo James, Zoe Kravitz, Kate Winslet, Miles Teller, Ashley Judd, Maggie Q

BASED ON VERONIA ROTH'S

bestselling YA novel, Divergent is about a girl who must fight, and fight hard, for the right to choose who she'll be. Snarky reviewers will retort that it's blooming obvious who she wants to be: Katniss Everdeen. The shadow of The Hunger Games hangs over the film. Its troubled heroine, who must be violent in a violent future world, is definitely not a unique selling point.

Yet the story is actually pretty different. Beatrice (The Descendants' Shailene Woodley) has grown up in a decaying future Chicago, after much of the world was destroyed in war, Unlike Katniss, Beatrice believes that her society, which splits people into five groups named for virtues, is justly ordered. At 16, she has an aptitude test to discover her own virtue, which involves scarv dreams that summon her worst fears.

The shocked examiner tells Beatrice that she's unclassifiable - a "Divergent", a menace to society - something she must hide in order to survive. In an agony of confusion, Beatrice elects to join the Dauntless, Chicago's hardass warrior defenders, and begin their brutal training programme. The results are pretty violent for a 12A film - you get the sense these youngsters are beating up each other very badly. Some may

find the violence more disturbing than that in The Hunger Games.

The story actually feels closer to Ender's Game (youngsters in tough training; fantasy mindgames), with echoes of 1979 gang film The Warriors. And for much of the way it's compelling, despite missteps like an awkward opening voiceover and some groan-worthy background music choices.

The performances are perfectly good. Woodley never tries to be an iconic heroine like Katniss, but ably conveys the discomfort in her own skin which fuels the character's anger. Beatrice finds a boyfriend without many surprises, and some

Older viewers will find it plays out too rote

of their moments together are clunky, but one dark dream scene makes a strong comment on relationship fears.

The main issue is the all-out conflict in the third act. There are some good payoffs and real surprises, but older viewers will find the way it plays out is too rote, and doesn't justify the long running time. Still, Divergent is an often entertaining, and sometimes very interesting, piece of teen SF.

Andrew Osmond

The lead male character, called Four, is meant to be 18 years old. British actor Theo James is actually 29!



Patema Inverted

A tale of topsy-turvy teens

Release Date: 2 May

PG | 98 minutes Distributor: Anime Limited Director: Yasuhiro Yoshiura

Cast: Yukiyo Fujii, Nobuhiko Okamoto, Takaya Hashi, Shintaro Ohara. Masavuki Kato

AFTER THE INTERSTELLAR

disorientations of Gravity, here's an anime which mucks with up and down.

Patema, a perky teen girl, lives in a post-disaster underground world. During her explorations, she falls into a chasm and ends up on the surface. The snag is, it's an upside-down surface, with upside-down people, where she's always in great danger of plunging into the sky. Luckily. Patema's helped by a surface boy her age (confusingly called Age). He hates his oppressive society, which teaches that "Invert" people like Patema are subhuman sinners. The adventures which follow will flip both their perspectives...

Patema Inverted is a highly likeable mix of simplicity and sophistication, an SF "conceptual breakthrough" yarn where a boy can fall for an upside-down girl. There are joyful moments where the oddly matched couple bounces over the ground like astronaut trapeze artists, and their tentative friendship has humour and charm. At first, it's a straightforward boy's fantasy, with Age protecting the ever-imperilled Patema, but the tables get turned later on. The sadistic baddie is one-dimensional, yet he's highly effective in the manner of a villain from a children's story.

The punchline leaves some outrageously big questions unanswered, and yet it feels so right that it hardly matters. Despite the logic gaps, Patema comes much closer than most films to the "sense of wonder" print SF of the genre's Golden Age. Andrew Osmond

The surface characters travel on giant moving walkways - a nod to Isaac Asimov's *The Caves Of Steel*.

coming soon

15 MAY

GODZILLA Gareth "Monsters" Edwards is in the director's chair as the big lizard returns to smash stuff up once more

22 MAY

X-MEN: DAYS OF FUTURE PAST

Professor X and co join forces with their younger selves in Bryan Singer's adaptation of a 1981 comics storyline.

23 MAY

LEGENDS OF OZ: DOROTHY'S **RETURN** Patrick Stewart and Dan Aykroyd are among the cast of this animated Wizard Of Oz sequel.

28 MAY

MALEFICENT Angelina Jolie plays the titular villainess in this liveaction take on Sleeping Beauty.

30 MAY

EDGE OF TOMORROW In this Doug Liman movie, Tom Cruise plays a soldier battling aliens who dies over and over. It's adapted from All You Need Is Kill (see p74).

13 JUNE

OCULUS Katee Sackhoff and Karen Gillan star in this horror about an antique mirror containing an evil force.

4 JULY

HOW TO TRAIN YOUR DRAGON

2 A warlord raises a dragon army to take over the world in this sequel to the 2010 animated film.

10 JULY

TRANSFORMERS: AGE OF EXTINCTION The Dinobots make their debut in the fourth film of the popular franchise.

REUIEWED ONLINE



Transcendence

Johnny Deep's terminally ill Al expert downloads his consciousness into a computer in this SF thriller.



Sadly, screenings took place to check out our review online at bit.lv/filmsSFX.

HERTIE BAY'S

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Rated

Hemlock Grove Season One

Twin Peaks? Or just pleased to see each other?

*** EXTRAS **

Release Date: OUT NOW!

2013 | 18 | 669 minutes | £29.99 (DVD)/£34.99 (Blu-ray) Distributor: Kaleidoscope Home Entertainment Creator: Brian McGreevy

Cast: Famke Janssen, Bill Skarsgård, Landon Liboiron, Dougray Scott, Penelope Mitchell



THERE'S A THIN line between the beguiling enigma of *Twin Peaks* and the dull, pretentious

twaddle of Kingdom

Hospital, and Hemlock Grove meanders from one side to the other for a dozen episodes before deciding it wanted to be Lost all along.

One of a growing number of Netflix original dramas, it's a very different series to the prestige production that preceded it: the hit House Of Cards. This time Netflix went for the jugular with that most bankable of genres: the werewolf vs vampire teen horror romance. But Hemlock Grove is no Twilight with extra gore; for a start, the central relationship is a bromance that doesn't so much hint at homoeroticism as act as a neon advert for gay marriage. Plus the vampires are cunningly called Upir, to make them seem less corny...

What Netflix appears to have been aiming for was a show it could

He doesn't so much transform; rather, the wolf explodes through his skin...
Top marks for gore

market on one level, then gleefully pervert in the actual episodes, in a move designed to get the social networks buzzing: a show with mysteries to dissect; bare chests to lust over; weirdness to ensure much "WTF?!"-ing; and gore to get the guys going, "Cool!" Bringing on board Eli Roth to direct the pilot and executive produce was just another part of the internet-friendly plan.

The crowdpleasing werewolf transformation in episode two is almost a microcosm for the show. Roman Geoffrey (Bill Skarsgård) - a rich pretty boy with lips like a snapdragon - watches gypsy pretty boy Peter Rumancek (Landon Liboiron) strip naked in preparation for the full moon. This is significant, because they should be natural enemies; not just because of the whole Upir vs wolf thing, but also because Roman lives in a mansion and Peter lives in a mobile home. Yet here they are, having only just met, revealing themselves to each other.

Then Peter changes. It's a stunning special effects sequence, and gut-churningly visceral. He doesn't so much transform: rather. the wolf explodes through his skin, then eats the bloody remains, eyes and all. Top marks for creative gore, but it does leave you wondering how on earth the transformation back takes place? Notably, we're never shown that, though Roman does describe it (with a misty look in his eye) as "beautiful". Like a lot about Hemlock Grove, it looks great but makes little sense. You're not supposed to ask too many questions.

Like *Twin Peaks*, the series starts with a murder, in this case on the night of a full moon. It's pretty obvious that a werewolf is



responsible, and it's not Peter, because he's well-heeled. So Peter and the borderline-psychopathic Roman form an uneasy alliance to discover the identity of the rogue wolf (clue: by episode five there's one character who clearly has no other dramatic function within the story).

That's just the tip of the iceberg, though. There's also Roman's mum (Famke Janssen, channelling Morticia Addams), who's sleeping with the brother of her dead husband (she killed him), whose evil research company is doing some experiments that apparently resurrected Roman's dead sister as a bald, seven-foot-tall

mismatched eyes and cheeks that glow blue when she blushes. There's an attempted takeover of the company looming. There's a crazy doctor who dictates all his thoughts into a dictaphone, complete with exquisite punctuation. A crazy man escapes from a psychiatric ward, wibbling about the Ouroboros, the snake that eats itself.

So Hemlock Grove is clearly aiming for odd, but after setting all this up in the first couple of episodes, it never becomes any odder. Any questions raised remain unanswered until the penultimate episode, after which the



show goes into flashback and revelation overdrive. As with the finale of Lost, some answers satisfy, some are disappointingly banal, and some things remain frustratingly unexplained.

In between, not a lot else happens, apart from the occasional bit of (impressively icky) gore and Roman going increasingly bonkers. He even has a dream episode which - despite a few promising weird moments - ends up being rather prosaic and pointless.

The series undoubtedly has its high points. Aside from the gore, Famke Janssen and Dougray Scott make a fascinatingly watchable odd couple. Skarsgård and Liboiron both give gutsy, edgy performances, bringing sensitivity to two characters who could easily be vile. Peter's sassy cousin Destiny is a blast. The final couple of episodes have some fine moments of gothic melodrama. And the mystery of what's going on at the research lab is interesting - arguably more so than the murders.

It's odd, though, that a show specifically designed for "bingeviewing" should spend so much time going round in circles in its middle stretches. The season could have done with losing a few episodes and tightening up, because unlike Twin Peaks there aren't enough interesting

supporting characters to explore to justify the padding.

Season two is coming. It's only ten episodes long. So maybe Netflix realised this too.

EXTRAS: The DVD release has zilch. The Blu-ray (rated) has seven short on-set featurettes (three minutes each), covering subjects such as the making of the transformation, the shooting of the central werewolf killing, and the issue of "what makes a monster", plus three trailers for the series. Dave Golder

Bill Skarsgård is the son of Stellan Skarsgård (Thor) and the brother of Alexander Skarsgård (True Blood).

Weirdest **Moments**

Well, the weirdest nonspoilery moments anyhow...

BLOOD-RED LIPSTICK

Spoilt rich kid Roman does some coke, cuts himself with a razor blade, dips his finger in the blood and paints his lips red. Then he looks in the mirror and says, "Shut up and kiss me." Well, it makes a change from, "You talking to me?"..

AN EYE-POPPING MOMENT

Human eyes pop out midtransformation. Fully-formed werewolf eats them. And you thought chewing on your fingernails was gross.



SUSPECT DREAM INTERPRETATION

Peter's mum tells him, "When I was pregnant with you, Nic had a vision that he was holding a baby and the baby was peeing on him. And the pee was coming out as one red silk ribbon after the other. That's how he knew you were gonna have a long and full life." Okaaaaay.

MEZCAL IS FOR WIMPS

Destiny's method for contacting the dead involves swallowing a maggot engorged on the blood of a dead girl. Afterwards, she upchucks violently. Wouldn't you?



ROMAN'S BABY SNAPS

Most babies look like Churchill Roman looks more like a Brussels sprout, arriving with birth membrane on his head. Olivia is so excited that he's "born with the Caul" that she gives a whole new meaning to the phrase "only a mother could love"

CHRISTINA KISSES A CORPSE

Hemlock Grove's would-be Hemingway decides that a corpse in the wood is actually a hidden camera gag (or something) and kisses it on the lips to prove she's no sucker. Then she notices the

smell... Dave Golder



47 Ronin

Keanu loses his dojo

EXTRAS ★★★

Release Date: 12 May

2013 | 12 | 118 minutes | £19.99 (DVD)/£24.99 (Blu-ray) Distributor: Universal Studios Director: Carl Rinsch Cast: Keanu Reeves, Hiroyuki Sanada, Ko Shibasaki, Tadanobu Asano, Min Tanaka



SOMETIMES YOU

review a film. Sometimes vou disinter a corpse.

47 Ronin's arrival on disc feels like

exhuming a body buried in the driveway of Universal Studios. The cement, alarmingly, is still moist. Poisoned by bad buzz, a gluttonous budget, multiple salvage jobs in the editing suite and a suspiciously low-key marketing campaign that didn't so much splash the film on the sides of buses as employ a lone nutter to mumble about it on the top deck, Carl Rinsch's directorial debut shuffled into cinemas at the end of 2013 and was duly enshrined as one

of the year's most exec-haunting misfires. What's not to love?

It aspires to be an Eastern Lord Of The Rings, JRR Tolkien by way of Murasaki Shikibu. Inspired by a Japanese folk story of exiled samurai avenging the death of their master, it adds a dollop of the fantastical to the tale's time-honoured themes of

won't be getting the Iron Man role.

vengeance and sacrifice. Japan, we're told, is "a group of magical islands, home to witches and demons" - and, more improbably, Keanu Reeves as a changeling despised by his fellow warriors and saddled with a sparkless starcrossed romance. Never the most alive of actors, Reeves tweaks his traditional zen surfer blankness to give a performance so utterly internal that you'll need an X-ray to see it.

It's a film clearly constructed with one eye on the lucrative Eastern market (an otherwise all-Asian cast leaves Reeves feeling weirdly

Reeves's performance is so internal you'll need an X-ray to see it

anomalous - even more so when you know his character isn't in the original fable). While the feudal pageantry of it all is intermittently impressive, it badly needs the flamboyance and vision of a Yimou Zhang. Compared to the glorious, heart-snatching likes of Hero and House Of Flying Daggers this is an earnest, inert piece of dragon-fu, just as handsome but every bit as dead-eyed as its leading man. **EXTRAS:** There are no bonuses on the DVD. The Blu-ray (rated) comes with four deleted scenes (totalling eight minutes), and four short featurettes (totalling 24 minutes) on "re-forging the legend", Keanu's role, the action scenes/fight training, and the effects of the fantastical creatures. Nick Setchfield

The 47 Ronin are commemorated each year on 14 December, at the Buddhist temple in Tokyo which houses their graves.

Son Of Batman

Wavne minor

★★★★★ EXTRAS★★★ Release Date: 5 May

2014 | 12 | 73 minutes | £15.99 (Blu-ray) Distributor: Warner Home Video Director: Fthan Snaulding

Cast: Jason O'Mara, Morena Baccarin, David McCallum, Giancarlo Esposito, Thomas Gibson



DAMIAN WAYNE'S a tricky character to

pull off. Son of Bruce Wayne and Talia al Ghul, he's an arrogant pre-teen assassin with

a thirst for blood and an attitude brattier than Bart Simpson. He has his good side too, but in this animated take on his origin story, all you get is the brat.

When Deathstroke leads a brutal surprise attack against the League of Assassins, Ra's al Ghul is killed. Talia takes Damian to Gotham and drops him off with his dad. Bats begins to teach him that just because he's naturally skilled at slaughtering his enemies, it doesn't automatically mean that he should.

After a spectacular (and bloody) opening, the Deathstroke plot fades into the background and the film



focuses squarely on Damian. It doesn't quite work. We're meant to buy his transition from pint-sized psycho to the new Robin, but it feels rushed and incomplete.

Still, the animation is great, with a slick anime-inspired style, and the voice cast is impressively starry. It's a shame the story has been retooled so heavily from Grant Morrison's original comics, but maybe this will lead to further adventures from the Scottish wizard's seven-year arc. **EXTRAS:** Featurettes on character design, Damian and the League of Assassins (35 minutes); "sneak peeks" at the next DC Universe movie and a Dark Knight Returns documentary (20 minutes); four bonus episodes of old Bat-toons (88 minutes). Will Salmon

Son Of Batman is a mini Firefly reunion, with Sean Maher (Simon) and Morena Baccarin (Inara) voicing Nightwing and Talia.

The King And The Mockingbird

Miyazaki's Gallic inspiration

**** EXTRAS

Release Date: OUT NOW! 1980 | II | 81 minutes | £15 99 (DVD) Distributor: StudioCanal **Director: Paul Grimault**

Cast: Jean Martin, Pascal Mazzotti, Raymond Bussieres, Agnes Viala, Renaud Marx, Hubert Deschamps



DON'T BE FOOLED

by the year of release. Everything that's great about this French animated classic is '40s through and through.

A quick history lesson. Director Paul Grimault began an adaptation of Hans Christian Andersen's "The Shepherdess And The Chimney Sweep" in 1948. It was never completed, but a version was released in 1950, against Grimault's wishes. Grimault eventually won back the rights and set about finishing the film, which was released as Le Roi Et L'Oiseau in 1980.

The 1980 cut suffers from some iarring stylistic clashes. It's like bits of Scooby-Doo have been edited into Snow White, with the newer



animation having the cheap, flat, stylised look of '70s cartoons.

But you can forgive that, because the '40s sections are brimming over with invention and bizarre imagery that pre-empts everything from Terry Gilliam's Monty Python animations to The Iron Giant and The Castle Of Cagliostro. This is full-on fantasy, brimming with bat-police, impossibly high castles, mecha, living paintings, hovercraft chases and steampunk elevators.

The pacing may be a little sluggish compared to modern animated blockbusters, the characters a little thin, and the plot little more than a series of setpieces, but the sheer volume of random bizarre ideas means it's mesmerising throughout.

EXTRAS: Rien. Dave Golder



The film's set in a land called Takicardia.
At one point, the subtitles amusingly spell
this as the heart condition tachycardia.

BLU-RAY DEBUT

Ghibli Blu-Rays

A trio of creature comforts

Princess Mononoke



Release Date: 19 May 1997 | PG | 128 minutes | £24.99 (double-play Blu-ray) Distributor: StudioCana

Director: Havao Mivazaki Cast: Billy Crudup, Gillian Anderson, Claire Danes, Billy Bob Thornton

Pom Poko



Release Date: OUT NOW!

1994 | PG | 119 minutes | £24.99 (double-play Blu-ray) Distributor: StudioCanal Director: Isan Takahata

Cast: Maurice LaMarche, Jonathan Taylor Thomas, Clancy Brown,

The Cat Returns

*** FXTRAS *** Release Date: 19 May

2002 | II | 75 minutes | £24 99 (double-play Blu-ray) Distributor: StudioCanal Director: Hirovuki Morita Cast: Anne Hathaway, Cary Elwes, Peter Boyle, Tim Curry

THE '90s WAS A FRUITFUL

time for Japan's celebrated animation house, Studio Ghibli. Between them, writer-directors Hayao Miyazaki and Isao Takahata produced five films, including two of the pair's most revered works: Pom Poko and Princess Mononoke.

Although it's not reflected in their PG certificates, they are among Ghibli's most adult offerings. Pom Poko, for example, doesn't shy away from the harsh reality of its

anthropomorphic protagonists' hopelessly bleak situation; while Mononoke, on top of some surprisingly graphic violence, tackles a range of challenging themes, such as environmentalism and the role of women and the disabled in an industrialised society.

Mononoke addresses man's impact on the environment head on, and is Miyazaki's quintessential work on his oft-returned-to theme. Ashitaka, a young prince, is forced into exile after his arm is infected during an encounter with a demonic boar. Journeying to find the Forest Spirit and an answer to the boar's corruption, he discovers a land at war and finds himself torn between Irontown's progressive but destructive leader Lady Eboshi and San, a human girl adopted by a wolf-goddess who will do anything to save the forest.

Mononoke was the film that made Miyazaki a household name, and is among Ghibli's most imaginative, thought-provoking and ambitious creations. There are no simple answers to the questions it asks and no clear lines between good and evil. Eboshi wreaks devastation upon the forest, but is progressive in her attitude towards women and lepers, while San puts more value on a blade of grass than any human life. It's a hugely powerful piece of storytelling.

Pom Poko doesn't have the scope of Mononoke, but is still wonderful in its own right. It posits that raccoons possess the ability to transform into an object of any shape or size, even into humans. But despite this the



A wry, charming, inventive and bonkers tale

Tama Hills raccoons are facing extinction at the hands of a housing development. It's a wry, charming, inventive and predictably bonkers tale of nature vs man, but at two hours it's far too long, and sometimes struggles with its erratic tone.

There's a clear connection between Pom Poko and Mononoke. but The Cat Returns stands further apart. Directed by Hiroyuki Morita, it's a slighter work that demands little of its audience, but is never less than entertaining.

A spin-off from non-SF Ghibli offering Whispers Of The Heart and starring that film's dapper kitty Baron Humbert von Gikkingen, The Cat Returns is the story of Haru, a schoolgirl searching for her place in the world. One day she saves a cat who, unbeknownst to her, is the Prince of the Cat Kingdom. In return she's offered the Prince's hand in marriage, something she wants no part of, but which the Cat King insists on. To escape this, Haru enlists the help of the Baron and his grumpy sidekick Muta.

It's fun, frothy, and beautifully animated, and Peter Boyle's Muta is endearing, but there's little substance. beyond a sledgehammer-subtle central message about believing in yourself, making this a lesser part of Ghibli's incredible legacy. EXTRAS: The vibrant HD transfers are the real draw with these Blu-ray releases, because the bonus features aren't up to much. All three come with storyboards, Japanese and American trailers, English and Japanese audio tracks and a DVD copy. Mononoke also gets a 30-minute "Princess Mononoke In The US" doc. which follows Miyazaki around the festival circuit. The Cat Returns has a 35-minute Making Of and a nine-minute "Behind The Mic" featurette. Jordan Farley

The only classic Ghibli film left yet to come out on Blu-ray anywhere is Spirited Away. Here's hoping for a 2015 release!



Paranormal Activity: The Marked Ones

Simon scares

★★★ EXTRAS ★★★

Release Date: 12 May 2014 | 15 | 81 minutes/101 minutes | £19.99 (DVD)/ £26.99 (Blu-ray)

Distributor: Paramount Home Entertainment Director: Christopher Landon Cast: Andrew Jacobs, Jorge Diaz, Gabrielle Walsh



IF JOHNNY Knoxville ever tires of broken bones, he should consider demonic possession. Judging by this fifth

outing in the found-footage franchise, it's a sure-fire route to some really sick stunts.

It follows slacker best buds Jesse and Hector, After their reclusive neighbour is shot dead, they discover she was a "bruja" (witch), responsible for "marking" the unborn Jesse. Soon he's displaying incredible abilities...

It's rather peculiar that the dude duo react to this development with unalloyed excitement. The same can be said of the most memorable sequences, where an old Simon game starts to act like a Quija board. And the camera POV is frequently baffling - who's filming them using a vending machine or watching TV, and why?

The Latino milieu has novelty value, adding gangbangers, kitsch Catholic statuary and a cleansing ritual involving eggs to the mix. But the film works best when at its most basic, conjuring jump shocks as a body drops from the sky, or an indistinct figure rushes at the camera. Despite a bizarre final twist that connects it firmly to the main series, the film still feels like an inessential tangent. But it's markedly better than PA4. EXTRAS: Seven deleted scenes (10) minutes); the Blu-ray (rated) adds an extended cut. Ian Berriman

Director Christopher Landon is the son of actor Michael Landon, star of Bonanza and Little House On The Prairie.





Vanishing Waves

Coma together



Release Date: 12 May 2012 | 18 | 120 minutes | £15.99 (DVD)

Distributor: Autonomy Pictures Director: Kristina Ruožyté Cast: Marius Jampolskis, Jurga Jutaité



THERE CAN BE few stranger tales of cinematic amour fou than the one in

Vanishing Waves. A very international

production (Lithuanian mostly, with contributuions from Latvia, Canada, Finland and France), it addresses universal themes of desire and loss through a fascinating premise. Research scientist Lukas is remotely connected to a coma victim, acting as a receiver for their neutral data. On the second connection, he's locking lips with a beautiful young woman; by the third, the two are rolling about a floor, buck naked. Unsurprisingly, he keeps mum...

The passionate, mostly mute bond that develops is displayed in avant garde erotica; in one scene, the lovers tumble into a pile of copulating bodies whose flesh is merging together. In another, their gleeful delight in physical sensation sees them pouring food over one another.

There's a spectre at the feast, though, as Lukas increasingly senses a third presence... It's a compelling mystery, and when the answers come, they're devastating. Beautifully shot, this is a surreal head trip which simultaneously intrigues the intellect, engages the emotions and sets the pupils dilating.

EXTRAS: An interview with the director (seven minutes); a Making Of (18 minutes); the soundtrack (57 minutes); trailers; plus the director's debut feature, The Collectress (88 minutes). Ian Berriman



The look of the black sensory deprivation tank Lukas uses is partially a wink to the monolith in 2001: A Space Odyssey.

He should really aet some sun.

Moon Man

A grand day out

EXTRAS ★★ ★ ★ ****

Release Date: OUT NOW!

2012 | U | 91 minutes | £12.99 (DVD) Distributor: Wildcard Distribution Directors: Stephen Schesch, Sarah Clara Webei Cast: Katharina Thalbach, Pat Laffan, Michael McElhatton,



BASED ON A BOOK

by French writer/ illustrator Tomi Ungerer, Moon Man is a curious creature. Brought to life by Irish

and German filmmakers, it's half a glorious. Yellow Submarine-style head-trip crossed with the kind of gentle children's TV fare we haven't seen in decades (think The Clangers or Mr Benn).

There's not much in the way of story: the man in the Moon is bored, so he grabs hold of the tail of a passing comet and journeys to Earth, where he has fun investigating our world while the authorities hunt him. Just when you

think this is an Iron Giant rehash, he hooks up with an inventor with the glorious name of Bunsen Van Der Dunkel (Pat Laffan) and begins to build a rocket to get home. But the dictator who rules the world wants to claim the Moon as his own, and so a race begins...

Moon Man is delightful, with silly iokes and sight gags and some seriously whacked-out animation. But it's also horribly slow - the kind of slow that can even bore an adult, let alone a child. For all its inventiveness and charm, it loses its way two-thirds through and begins to plod; only the final few scenes re-engage you with the plot. Too long, then, but still well worth a watch.

EXTRAS: A featurette about some kids painting a mural, and a children's activity sheet. Jayne Nelson



Where The Wild Things Are's Maurice Sendak called Moon Man "easily one of the best picture books in recent years".

AMPHIBIOUS

Release Date: 5 May 2013 | 15 | 83 minutes | £14.99 (DVD)



Back in the day Brian Yuzna was the director. writer or producer of horrors like Society, Re-Animator and From

Beyond. Then he moved to Spain. to shoot low-budget movies for Filmax. Now he's based in Indonesia. This sea-monster movie features a marine biologist smugglers and an orphan with a connection to a gigantic aquatic scorpion. The CGI effects are adequate and there are a few decent gore gags, but the first hour is terribly plodding, and many of the performances are dire.

CELLAR DWELLER

Release Date: 5 May 1988 | 18 | 74 minutes | £14.99 (DVD)



Don Mancini, writer of all the Child's Play films, penned this cheesy '80s B-movie Thirty years ago an

artist (Jeffrey Combs. in a brief appearance) accidentally brought his horror-comic monster to life by reading from an old grimoire. Now a female admirer resurrects his creation. Cue much chewing of entrails and ripping off of heads. It's a very basic tale, but the facial animatronics on the bloke-in-asuit monster are pretty decent. By the standards of Charles Band's Empire Pictures, this ain't too bad

THE HILLS HAVE **EYES PART 2**

Release Date: OUT NOW! 1985 | 18 | 86 minutes | £14.99 (DVD)/£19.99



Now remastered for Blu-ray, this shoddy seauel is set eiaht

years after the 1977

Wes Craven horror in which a family battles mutant cannibals. After a dirt-bike team take a short cut through the desert, they end up getting attacked. Boring and uneventful, with bloodless kills, it's also shamelessly padded out with flashbacks to the original film infamously, even a dog gets one.

THEATRE OF BLOOD

Release Date: 5 May 1973 | 15 | 104 minutes | £24.99 (Blu-ray)/ £29.99 (Steelbook Blu-ray)



Though it's not, strictly speaking, SFX material, this jet-black horrorcomedy deserves flagging up as one

of Vincent Price's best films. The arch ham is perfectly cast as an arrogant Shakespearean actor who exacts gruesome Shakespeare-themed vengeance on a series of theatre critics. Our favourite: the chap who's tricked into eating his poodles in homage to Titus Andronicus. Highlight of the bonus features: commentary by all The League Of Gentlemen.

TIDELAND

Release Date: 12 May 2005 | 15 | 115 minutes | £12.99 (DVD)/£15.99 (Blu-ray)



Terry Gilliam's 2005 film gets a Blu-ray release. Focused on a ten-year-old girl left alone after her

smackhead father (Jeff Bridges) ODs, this demented gothic fairytale plays like a twisted cross between Alice In Wonderland. Trainspotting and Psycho. We said: "A shriekingly grotesque, overlong and queasy calamity Without any moments of relatable normality, the film becomes a non-stop cavalcade of overplayed strangeness that's painful to watch.



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BLU-RAY DEBUT

Frankenstein **And The Monster** From Hell

The end of an era

★★★ EXTRAS ★★★↓

Release Date: OUT NOW!

1974 | 15 | 93 minutes | £24.99 (double-play Blu-ray) Distributor: Icon Entertainment

Cast: Peter Cushing, Shane Briant, Madeline Smith, John Stratton, Dave Prowse



TERENCE Fisher's last

directorial gig for Hammer was not only its final Frankenstein film, but

the studio's last stab at gothic.

By 1974, that template had long-since become outmoded, and there's something sad about the way Monster From Hell struggles to compete in a radically altered cinematic landscape by upping the gore quotient: cue roughly handled brains, close-ups of bone saws slicing into skulls, and a Creature with a penchant for stabbing victims with broken glass.

Shane Briant plays an acolyte of the Baron, committed to an asylum after recreating his ungodly experiments. There he finds his monomaniac mentor is not only, unexpectedly, alive, but basically running the joint. And as the facility's doctor, he has all the access to bodies he could need...

It's a very confined film, with no

location work: fortunately the asylum sets are excellent. Cushing is superb, expressing authority and simmering rage with consummate ease. John Stratton is equally good as the asylum's director, a loathsome, quivering sleazeball.

The predictability of the plotting soon has you praying for surprises, though... until they actually arrive, at which point Frankenstein's plan becomes both absurd and offensive, as proceedings are sleazily "spiced up" with the threat of rape. This is a particularly unwelcome outcome in a film whose female lead (Madeline Smith) is already lumbered with the role of an angelic mute.

EXTRAS: Hammer expert Marcus Hearn moderates a commentary with Briant and Smith. "Taking Over The Asylum", a solid Making Of (25 minutes), features five cast and three experts, while career overview "Charming Evil" (13 minutes) interviews Terence Fisher's daughter. You also get the option to watch in "full frame" 1.37:1 aspect ratio, a CD-ROM booklet, and a stills gallery. Ian Berriman

Dave Prowse, who plays the Monster, remembers that when the film came ou he went to see it with... Esther Rantzen.

Scarecrow

★★ ★ EXTRAS ★★ Release Date: OUT NOW! 2013 | 18 | 83 minutes | £14 99 (DVD)



CAN YOU GUESS what the plot of this Svfv TV movie is? If

you're thinking, "scarecrows come to life and harass

American teens", pat yourself on the back. The title should have been a plural.

In fairness, Scarecrow has decent visuals. There's some good use of locations, and the effects are fairly solid. The CG scarecrows, though, lack the physical menace of a man in a suit. Compare them to the monsters in Doctor Who's "Human Nature", and they'd lose.

The story is routine. The cast are the usual group of pretty. slightly annoying (and entirely white) teens. Worst of all, it's all so tame. One kill, which should have been spectacular, is bloodless. In the '80s vou wouldn't have been able to see the screen for flying grue. Call that progress?

EXTRAS: None. Will Salmon

MurderDrome

** FXTRAS **

Release Date: 12 May 2013 | 15 | 72 minutes | £12.99 (DVD)



BLAME QUENTIN Tarantino. He's given less talented and less moneyed filmmakers the idea to do things like blast out obscure

vinvl on the soundtrack, have big, flashy typography, be ultraviolent and do "quirky" edits. Australian horror-comedy MurderDrome tries all this, but can't save the product.

Skye is a roller derby player who gets a new boyfriend with a demonic ex. Literally: she's a malevolent demon with an array of mean weapons, and she's narked.

Said "Hell Grazer" is the best thing here: leather-clad, on blades and dealing death with delight. Everything else is aimless, tonally inconsistent and unfunny. MurderDrone, more like it. **EXTRAS:** Picture-in-picture commentary with the director and cast (boozing and smoking); a VFX breakdown (three minutes); a gag reel (nine minutes); four music videos: trailer. Russell Lewin

THE TICK LIST

GRAVITY

Sandra Bullock struggles to survive in space. THE HOBBIT: THE DESOLATION OF SMAUG

Less singing Dwarves, more dragony brilliance.

CONTINUUM SEASON TWO Thirteen more twisty-turny outings for a future cop in present-day Vancouver.

FROZEN Disney's new riff on Hans Christian Andersen's "The Snow Queen".

BILL & TED'S EXCELLENT ADVENTURE

Most excellent Blu-ray, most heinous old extras.

GAME OF THRONES SEASON THREE the year...

DEAD OF NIGHT The 1945 Ealing horror anthology comes to Blu-ray.

CAT PEOPLE Jacques Tourneur's subtle 1942 horror about a woman who transforms into a panther.

DA VINCI'S DEMONS SEASON ONE David Goyer plays fast and

loose with history. THE MACHINE

This thought-provoking UK indie has echoes of *Blade Runner*.

THE RULES: New releases push down old releases. DVDs drop out of the chart after three months.

WO1, NO DUD? SOMEONE RELEASE THIS!

SPIRITS OF THE AIR, GREMLINS OF THE CLOUDS FILM | 1989

Alex "The Crow" Proyas's debut was this Australian film, set in a post-apocalyptic outback. Centred on a wheelchair-using inventor obsessed with building a flying machine, it boasts some bold, bizarre production design.





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Orphan Black Season One

Seeing double

*** EXTRAS

Release Date: OUT NOW!

2013 | 15 | 424 minutes | £24.99 (DVD)/£29.99 (Blu-ray) Distributor: 2Entertain

Creators: Graeme Manson, John Fawcett Cast: Tatiana Maslany, Kevin Hanchard, Dylan Bruce, Jordan Gavaris. Maria Dovie Kennedy



BREAKOUT performances

performances don't come any more attention-grabbing than Tatiana Maslany's stunning,

chameleonic turn in BBC America's sci-fi drama, *Orphan Black*. Over the ten-episode first season she breathes life into around half a dozen characters, each of whom are distinct enough that if they didn't share the same face you couldn't imagine they were played by the same person. It's a show that demands you watch for Maslany alone.

Remarkably, the rest of the series matches this impossibly high benchmark: *Orphan Black* is

compulsive viewing. Maslany's Sarah is a cock-er-ney who encounters a woman who could be her twin on a train platform, only for the distressed doppelganger to throw herself on the tracks. Sarah assumes the woman's identity with an eye to robbing her, but uncovers a mystery that reveals more about her own

history than she could have imagined.

It's common for shows to take weeks, if not years, to find themselves, but *Orphan Black* has one of the most confident, deftly written first seasons in an age. It's smart, tightly plotted and never feels formulaic. One week Sarah might be at a house party pretending to be a

suburban housewife, the next she's on the trail of a self-flagellating assassin. The pacing, and the balance between the show's twisty-turny narrative and its more intimate character moments, are near perfect. A couple of the supporting cast are a little on the bland side, but don't let that put you off – *Orphan Black* is essential viewing.

EXTRAS: None. Jordan Farley

DRINKING GAME KNOCK BACK A SHORT WHEN...

You meet a new character played by Tatiana Maslany.

Sarah changes her accent mid-sentence.

The pink phone rings.

Art looks grumpy for no reason.

Sarah says "blaaaady".

Helena says "seeeeesta".

Cosima explains some mumbojumbo science.

Alison gets nervous and touches her face.

Helena demonstrates her strange eating habits.



Lost Girl Season Four

Love is all around

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: 19 May 2013-14 | 15 | 549 minutes | £24.99 (DVD) Distributor: Sony Pictures Home Entertainment Creator: MA Lovretta

Cast: Anna Silk, Ksenia Solo, Kris Holden-Ried, Rick Howland,



HAS LOST GIRL

lost it? This fourth season seems to have meandered down a bumpier highway than usual, hitting potholes

(or should that be plotholes?) that threaten to rip off its usually oh-so-stable wheels.

The action opens with succubus heroine Bo, lost in some strange netherworld. She's soon returned – minus her memory – and discovers she's now aligned with the Dark Fae. Naturally this pisses her off, so she sets out to find out why... and consequently bumps into this season's biggest problem.

Yes, the woman who's already juggling an epic love triangle with Dyson and Lauren now finds herself lumbered with another True Love, played by Kyle Schmid. It's all a little



too much to handle, particularly when the poor newbie is so underwritten that it's hard to see where all the feelings are coming from. The dialogue isn't quite as witty and sharp as usual this year either, although there's more than enough sass to keep you chuckling.

Thankfully, this is still Lost Girl, and what's lacking in some areas is effortlessly made up for by the cast. Special praise must go to Ksenia Solo, who gets a scene towards the end of the season that will blow your socks off (you'll know it when you see it). This and a few other treats on that unusually bumpy highway prove that even when it's not quite firing on all cylinders, Lost Girl is still a bloody good romp.

Extras: None. Jayne Nelson

Lost Girl's fifth season will film this spring, to air in Canada in the autumn. Vex and The Morrigan are returning as semi-regulars.

Ice Soldiers

*** EXTRAS

Release Date: 5 May 2013 | 15 | 88 minutes | £9.99 (DVD) £12.99 (Blu-ray)



THIS ACTIONhorror is a bit of an

oddity. Set in the icy wilds of Canada, it follows a group of scientists (led by

Michael Ironside) as they poke at a squad of deep-frozen Russian super-soldiers.

The first half feels like an unthreatening remake of *The Thing*, but then it takes a secondhalf swerve. The Russians get loose and go on the rampage – while bouncing to hip-hop. One of the surviving scientists goes after them – but stops to pick up a comedy sidekick (who, against all the rules, is actually quite funny). The film takes on a fun '90s B-movie vibe.

The soldiers themselves are a bit rubbish, with their lumbering gaits and ice-white hair, and a wolf attack is poorly edited. Still, there's something kinda charming about this throwback to the days of VHS action flicks.

EXTRAS: None. Will Salmon

Gallowwalkers

★★ ★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW! 2013 | 15 | 88 minutes | £11.99 (DVD)



THIS

supernatural
Western, directed by
the aptly named
Andrew Goth, got
stuck in a production

quagmire for the best part of a decade, having being filmed in 2006. That bit of trivia is probably the most interesting thing about the film.

Wesley Snipes plays Anan – a man cursed to live forever after killing the gang who murdered his lover. Unfortunately, part of the curse is that the people he offs *also* come back... With the evil dead on the loose, he recruits young rogue Fabulos to help him put them back in the ground once and for all.

The desert locations are pretty, but this is weak stuff. The costumes look cheap, the gore is ghastly and the script is full of howlers like "Forgive me father for I have skinned". It's incoherent and – critically – dull.

EXTRAS: None. Will Salmon

Blind Woman's Curse

The Girls With The Dragon Tattoo



Release Date: OUT NOW!

1970 | 15 | 85 minutes | £19.99 (double-play Blu-ray) Distributor: Arrow Video Director: Teruo Ishii

Cast: Meiko Kaji, Hoki Tokuda, Makoto Satô



SEEKING

inspiration for some truly eye-catching body art? Look no further. You'll need to rope in a few friends

to get the full effect, though.

Burning-eyed beauty Meiko Kaji (later of the Lady Snowblood and Female Prisoner Scorpion films) stars in this bewildering mash-up of Yakuza drama, supernatural horror and ero guro nansensu (erotic grotesque nonsense), as Akemi, deadly leader of a Yakuza gang. Her back adorned with a dragon's head tattoo, she's followed into battle by five female followers who have the rest of the beast inked on theirs.

List a few elements and it sounds like a deranged masterpiece. A slow-mo swordfight in a furious



downpour. Topless women smoking opium pipes. Torture by well-dunking. A villain who sports a bowler hat and a red loincloth, blithely displaying 95% of his wobbling arse cheeks to all and sundry. A cackling hunchback who disguises himself by balancing a decapitated head on his bonce.

Unfortunately, the film's disparate elements are so weakly connected that you may often feel like you must have accidentally nodded off for a moment and missed something.

And the supernatural element

(a blood-lapping black cat, seemingly to blame for many of Akemi's woes) is so slight that it's practically non-existent

EXTRAS: An erudite, formal, and rather dry commentary by Japanese cinema expert Jasper Sharp, heavy on the history of the industry; trailers; a booklet featuring a solitary essay. Underwhelming – but the pristine HD transfer looks stunning. lan Berriman



According to director Teruo Ishii, he'd already started shooting when the studio asked him to work in a ghost story element.

The Invoking



Release Date: 12 May 2013 | 15 | 79 minutes | £12.99 (DVD)



DESPITE THE

misleadingly spooky title, there's nothing supernatural going on in *The Invoking*. A dopey almost-slasher

that wants to be a psychological thriller, it concerns a young woman who takes a group of friends back to the house she grew up in; one by one, they meet the wrong end of a knife in a less than pleasant fashion.

It's a short film, but a painfully slow one. The camera lingers over everything, from unremarkable tree branches to the faces of actors who've finished reading their lines and aren't sure what to do next. Presumably this is meant to be ominous, but it comes off as amateurish. And the final sting is so implausible that you'll resent every excruciating minute spent getting there.

EXTRAS: Two commentaries, set photos, and a 70-minute (yep, really!) Making Of. **Sarah Dobbs**

The Last Keepers



EXTRAS

Release Date: OUT NOW!
2013 12 | 86 minutes | £14 99 (DVD)



ATTEMPTING TO ride what remains of the teenage-kicksmeets-magic-sticks wave, The Last Keepers drifts saccharinely

through a young girl's awakening to spiritual powers, love, pan pipes, love, lessons about trees and love. If you've a passion for hemp, crying, and people touching leaves with their eyes closed, this is the film for you. If you like literally anything else, don't bother.

Though the cast tries hard, paper-thin plotting, lazily drawn characters, reliance on cliché (hey, did you know that you shouldn't trust the guy in school with the leather jacket?) and an utter lack of tension throughout drain any potential magic from the screen. The end result: a mess of rejected scenes from She's All That and Sabrina The Teenage Witch. Avoid.

Scopers

EXTRAS

Release Date: OUT NOW!

2011 | 15 | 90 minutes | £14.99 (DVD)



WHEN TROUBLED

Terminator 3 star Nick Stahl plays the lead in a film and it feels like a waste of his time, you've got

problems. Stahl is Joshua, a telepath, or "scoper", working for the NSA. Exactly what he does and why his target matters we never find out, because when Joshua meets the target's daughter (Mía Maestro), he abandons everything for her at the drop of a plot device.

A reasonably decent cast saves *Scopers* from becoming truly painful, but only just. It looks like a '90s TV movie, with some truly woeful CGI. A vaguely interesting premise – the NSA eavesdropping on people's thoughts – could have been brilliantly prescient, but sadly any political or moral dimension is sacrificed for a film that's half romance, half limp conspiracy thriller and wholly underwhelming.

EXTRAS: None. **Ed Prior**

coming soon

19 MAY

NOSFERATU THE VAMPYRE

Werner Herzog's 1979 remake of FW Murnau's classic 1922 *Dracula* adaptation comes to Blu-ray.

THE SHADOW OF THE CAT A killer kitty takes revenge for the murder of its elderly owner in this 1961 horror from the Hammer stable.

26 MAY

I, FRANKENSTEIN Aaron Eckhart plays the intelligent monster taking on Bill Nighy's demonic billionaire.

2 JUNE

RE-ANIMATOR Stuart Gordon's 1985 horror-comedy take on HP Lovecraft gets an extras-crammed double-disc Blu-ray release.

TRUE BLOOD SEASON SIX

Another ten episodes of saucy Sookie Stackhouse shenanigans.

9 JUNE

THE COMPLETE DR PHIBES A Bluray box set of Vincent Price-starring 1971 cult favourite *The Abominable Dr Phibes* and its 1972 follow-up *Dr Phibes Rises Again*.

IN THE FLESH SERIES ONE AND TWO All nine episodes of the BBC Three show in which an undead young fella returns to his Lancashire village. **ROBOCOP** The new remake of the Paul Verhoeven favourite.

16 JUNE

BLOODY BIRTHDAY Three ten-yearolds born simultaneously during a total eclipse go on a killing spree in this 1981 slasher flick.

DEVIL'S DUE A newlywed couple are shocked by an unexpected pregnancy in this Satanic-impregnation horror.

PERSON OF INTEREST SEASON

TWO Another 22 episodes of the show in which NYPD cops use advanced surveillance technology to try and prevent crimes.

STAR TREK: THE NEXT
GENERATION SEASON SIX Scotty,
hologram-Moriarty and a transporter
copy of Riker all feature in the latest
Blu-ray box set.

23 JUNE

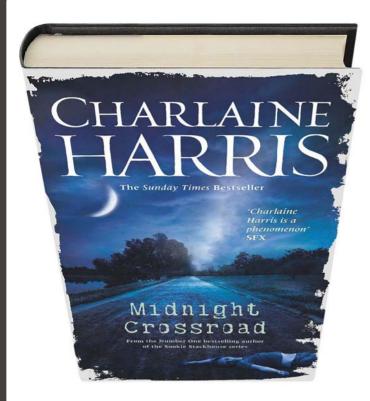
HER Joaquin Phoenix falls in love with an Al operating system voiced by Scarlett Johansson in Spike Jonze's SF romance.

MEMOIRS OF A SURVIVOR Julie Christie stars in this 1981 film based on a dystopian novel by Doris Lessing.

30 JUNE

HELIX SEASON ONE Scientists investigate a mysterious viral outbreak at an arctic research station in Ronald D Moore's latest series.





Midnight Crossroad

What Sookie's Creator Did Next

Release Date: 8 May 320 nages | £18.99 (hardback)/£6.99 (ehook) Author: Charlaine Harris Publisher: Gollancz

CHARLAINE HARRIS'S FIRST

novel since she ended her Southern Vampire Mysteries series comes as a pleasant surprise. While the last few Sookie stories felt rather flat, Midnight Crossroad sparkles. In interviews, Harris has always stressed how character-driven her writing is, and it's clear from the first page that she's enjoying exploring new personalities.

Not that all the characters are entirely new. The story begins as young internet psychic Manfred Bernardo, who first popped up in Harris's Harper Connelly stories, moves into a rented property in the tiny hamlet - not much more than a crossroads with a few houses beside it - of Midnight. His landlord is

Bobo Winthrop, who was originally seen in Harris's Shakespeare books. The other residents are a strange bunch. They include Fiji, a plump, lovelorn witch; gay couple Joe and Chuy; Madonna, an African-American woman who runs the diner: and Lemuel the vampire and his casually violent lady friend Olivia, who live in the basement below Bobo's pawn shop.

The characters have a peculiar charm, and it's hard not to warm to their happy toleration of each other's quirks, but they don't feel as original as they could be. Sometimes they're just too stereotyped (Joe and Chuy run an antiques store and nail bar, which is a painful cliché), but frequently they echo characters and situations in other Charlaine Harris stories rather too closely. Madonna lives with her husband and baby in a trailer behind her diner, just like Sam lives behind Merlotte's in the Sookie stories, and her diner serves a similar

function, being the one place where every character turns up sooner or later. The parents of a missing woman have hired a private detective to find her, reminiscent of Debbie Pelt. Even the racist antagonists carry over from the Shakespeare books, and with a couple of tweaks wouldn't be out of place in Bon Temps.

It's good that the story is told in the third person, and follows several characters, rather than just one. This bodes well for the longevity of the series: there's nothing to say Harris has to follow exactly the same characters through all the novels, so she'll be able to focus on the ones who are interesting. You don't get to see the everyday business of some of the more unusual characters, like Lemuel and the Reverend, which means that they retain their mystery,

Despite the potential for variety, it's rather predictable

and remain intriguing. You also get the feeling that there's much more to be said about many of Midnight's citizens, and can look forward to discovering their secrets in future.

Despite the potential for variety, the plot of Midnight Crossroad is rather predictable. As soon as you hear that Bobo's girlfriend walked out one day, never to be seen again, you know she's likely to pop up again soon. It's also easy to spot which character Harris is trying to keep present without really being noticeable, and therefore to have a good idea what the big reveal will be long before it finally comes.

It'll be interesting to see where the series goes from here, as the interactions of the characters are really what makes Midnight Crossroad work. The plot is rather thin and lacking in twists, but it's enjoyable to see how the different inhabitants of Midnight get along, simultaneously respecting each other's boundaries while forming a tight-knit community. However, as Fiji, Bobo, Manfred and the rest become more familiar, the storylines will need to be stronger. First time's the charm - but after that, you need a meaty plot. Miriam McDonald



If you'd like to try before you buy, you can read the first two chapters of *Midnight Crossroad* at http://bit.ly/midcross.



The Three

An unholy trinity?

Release Date: 22 May 470 pages | £14.99 (hardback)/£6.99 (ebook) Author: Sarah Lotz Publisher: Hodder & Stoughton

How much would it

take to tip the world over into chaos and superstition? Not a lot, if this excellent - and frightening novel is to be believed...

One day four jets plummet out of the sky. Hundreds are killed, but four survivors crawl from the wreckage. One of them, Pamela May Donald, leaves a cryptic, ominous message before dving. The others - the titular "three" - are children, miraculously unharmed.

"Black Thursday", as the event becomes known, is the biggest media sensation since 9/11. Preachers are convinced that it's a sign of the impending apocalypse and that the kids are evil. Others blame aliens or the government. Journalist Elspeth Martins sets out to discover the truth...

The Three is global in scale hopping between London, Japan and the States - and epic in ambition. The cast is equally diverse, but Lotz's decision to present the story as if it were a non-fiction book makes it easy to keep track of everyone. It also allows her to hop from genre to genre, mixing in political satire, supernatural horror and sci-fi.

Comparisons could be made with the structure of World War Z, but this is an altogether more insidious work. You're presented with evidence and expected to put the pieces together yourself. Some may find that frustrating, but it's hard not to be ensnared by the book's many mysteries, and its overpowering sense of looming disaster. Will Salmon



Lotz has "a trunkful" of unfinished novels, including one about "a giant spider that learns to communicate via Morse code".

The Forever Watch

Ark life

Release Date: 1 May 336 pages | £16.99 (hardback)/£8.99 (ebook)





IN A FUTURE WHERE ALL

memory is recorded, all crime is eventually solved. Someone saw it happen, even if it was the perpetrator, and so every case is – officially – closed. This makes it all the more disconcerting when someone is inexplicably, gruesomely killed, their body ripped apart; middle-ranking bureaucrat Hana Dempsey is alarmed to discover that not only is this repeatedly happening, but all evidence of it is being swept away.

The backdrop to all this is an old science fiction staple – humanity has abandoned a dying Earth and entered a space ark to head out towards a new planet. The ship, given the on-the-nose name of the Noah, is so vast in scale that it's laid out like a city, with streets between its buildings; day and night are simulated, and it even rains. There's something very appealing



However, what makes the novel really special is how debut author David Ramirez brings in elements from other genres – noir murder mystery, conspiracy thriller and horror – and balances them against each other. His clear-eyed prose conjures a brilliantly unsettling atmosphere, which only deepens as the novel's twists and turns reveal themselves, and the stakes of Hana's investigation start high and get higher. A superb book, cooly plotted and full of menace.

Eddie Robson



Before quitting to become a writer, David Ramirez was a molecular biologist who worked on the Human Genome Project.

Memory Of Water

Nor any drop to drink

Release Date: 8 May 263 pages | £12.99 (hardback)/£8.75 (ebook) Author: Emmi Itäranta

Publisher: Harper Voyager

EMMI ITÄRANTA'S LOVELY

debut novel comes garlanded with award wins and nominations from its original publication, in 2012, in the author's native Finland. Set in a climate-changed future Scandinavia where water is rationed by the iron grip of military rule and snow is something you read about in books, it centres on a young woman, Noria, learning the rites of the tea ceremony from her father, in a remote village.

The novel sits firmly towards the literary end of the fantastical spectrum, and so perhaps won't be to the tastes of some *SFX* readers: it's a lyrical, reflective story, less concerned with the details of how its dystopian future works than with exploring its effects on those who live in it. After a few brief but clunky infodumps early on, Itäranta mostly leaves readers to join the dots themselves, and the book is better



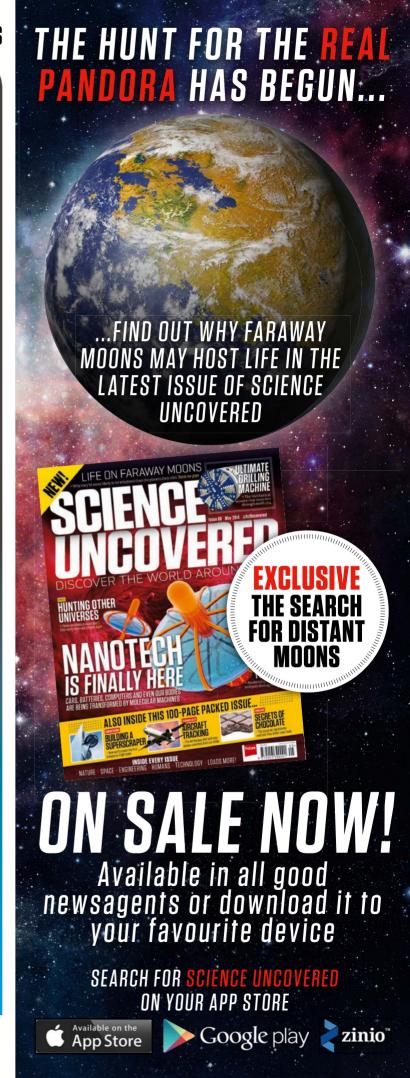
for it. Amid Noria's meditative routines – raking the sand of the rock garden, preparing precious water for tea – we catch glimpses of how people etch out lives within this oppressive, resource-starved environment: the compromises they make, the things they avoid seeing, the secrets they keep... and the ones they don't

Memory Of Water's story deals more in atmosphere than action, but is no less involving for that; Itäranta's steady piling on of pressure on her protagonist grips, even as her prose soothes.

Nic Clarke



The book started off as three pages of a short story for a Creative Writing MA... until Itäranta's teacher said, "This is a novel."





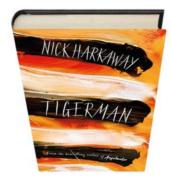
Does whatever a tiger can

Release Date: 22 May 372 pages | £16.99 (hardback)/£6.99 (ebook) Author: Nick Harkaway Publisher: William Heinemann

NICK HARKAWAY DOESN'T

really do normal, as readers of his previous novels The Gone-Away World and Angelmaker will know only too well. Dense and flamboyant, both books were so wildly inventive it was hard to imagine how Harkaway would top them. It turns out he's instead gone for a change of pace with his third novel, an offbeat drama set on the fictional North African island of Mancreau.

Thanks to a polluted, chemically enhanced volcano with the potential to exterminate all life on Earth, Mancreau is now a legal no-man'sland that's soon to be evacuated. Weary British Army sergeant Lester Ferris is there to help keep the peace, and has ended up befriending an enigmatic local boy with a comic book obsession. However, when violence breaks out, Lester enlists the boy's help and creates a masked avenger known as Tigerman...



Harkaway has crafted an engaging story that examines the nature of heroes and the tropes of old-school pulp fiction, mixing sharp characterisation with an energetic portrait of a society heading for apocalypse. He's also kept the story's weirder elements largely in the background, instead focusing on the relationship between Lester and his mysterious boy sidekick. Often hilarious but with an undercurrent of dark violence, this is an impressive novel that conceals provocative questions inside an old-school tale of ripping adventure. Saxon Bullock



Also recently published, by Harkaway: Keeping Up With The Joneses, a Doctor Who story for the Time Trips ebooks series.

Thief's Magic

Industrial plight and magic

Release Date: 15 May 560 pages | £20 (hardback)/£6.64 (ebook) Author: Trudi Canavan Publisher: Orbit

IT'S EASY TO SEE WHY

Trudi Canavan's novels so often make the bestseller lists. Her easy, flowing style makes for effortless reading, and her use of the five senses helps to immerse you in her worlds. In this latest series, Millennium's Rule, she's exploring two new worlds, in two separate story stands that are yet to cross.

The first thread takes off out of the starting blocks like Usain Bolt on steroids and doesn't pause for breath thereafter. It follows archaeology student Tyen's adventures, from an attack on his dig and the discovery of a mindreading, sentient book to his fleeing from The Academy to avoid being wrongly convicted as a thief.

By comparison, the storyline of Rielle, daughter of rich traders, loops languidly through her life at Temple lessons and her work at her family's estate. Her story only really



accelerates later in the volume when she's thrown headlong into disaster by the people she trusts.

You can't help supporting both of these central characters, mostly because (in an approach also commonly used by Juliet McKenna) Canavan sticks with everyday people rather than populating the story with princes and princesses. Add in some delightful worldbuilding - a magic-driven industrial revolution and suffocating cities polluted by magic - and the result is a novel that's a vivid and rather enjoyable experience.

Sandy Auden



Trudi Canavan has also contributed to the Time Trips Doctor Who range recently, with Third Doctor tale Salt Of The Earth.

Shanghai Sparrow

The sound of violence

Release Date: 8 May

416 pages | £7.99 (paperback)/£5.99 (ebook) Author: Gaie Sehold Publisher: Solaris

ONE MAJOR CRITICISM OF

steampunk is that it glorifies Victorian empire-building and tends to focus on the United States and Europe. Shanghai Sparrow looks like addressing that, though there's only any action in China at the start and end of the story; the rest of the book takes place in southern England.

Orphan Eveline Duchen, who fled her uncle's house, has been living on her wits in London. Her uncle passed off Eveline's mother's work with sound-making machines as his own; "his" work attracted the attention of a civil servant, who's found a similar device in China that he believes could be used to conquer the fairy folk - and who believes Eveline can make it work.

There's a lot to like about Shanghai Sparrow, in particular the fact that characters are not born to be good at something - instead,



they achieve their skills through study. Also, the female characters support each other, and Sebold doesn't bother with tedious descriptions of boots and bustles every five pages.

The book does have its flaws though, the glaring one being that almost every white man is malign, while women and people of colour are generally much more decent to each other. In addressing some of the criticisms levelled at steampunk, Sebold may have gone too far in the other direction. Nonetheless, overall it's an enjoyable read. Miriam McDonald

Gaie Sebold will be signing copies of her book at Forbidden Planet's Londo egastore, on Thursday 8 May from 6.00pm

The Voices

Sounds of the underground

Release Date: 8 May

375 pages | £7.99 (paperback)/£4.29 (ebook)

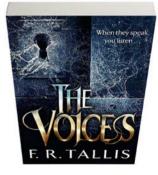
Author: FR Tallis Puhlisher: Pan

SET AGAINST THE

backdrop of 1976 Britain, with the country in economic decline and searching for social and political direction, this third horror novel from former clinical psychologist FR Tallis (who also writes crime fiction as Frank Tallis) is about crises of identity.

Young mother and former model Laura finds a burgeoning interest in feminism; her old-school husband Christopher tries to claw back his former glory as a composer with a concept piece using voices of the dead: their best friends explore their sexuality separately, as secrets and lies crack open relationships...

On one level a Hanif Kureishiesque study of an era, The Voices struggles somewhat with its own identity, weaving in a Victorian haunted house ghost story, as Christopher starts to pick up strange messages on his audio equipment which might just be linked to a



turn-of-the-century magician who claimed he could make children vanish. But are the muffled sounds words from beyond the grave, or are these voices inside Laura and Christopher's heads?

Highly compelling, undeniably scary, with a final payoff so horrific it's hard to shake, The Voices is clever but at times infuriatingly elliptical, leaving you with more questions than answers. Its biggest problem, though, is the characters: psychologically rounded, but so smug and irritating that it's impossible to care about them.

Rosie Fletcher



Amongst other things, FR Tallis likes Susan Hill, MR James, Proust, Mahler, prog rock and chocolate buttons.

The Oversight

The dark streets of history

Release Date: 6 May

434 pages | £14.99 (hardback)/£5.03 (ebook) Author: Charlie Fletcher

Publisher: Orbit

A SMALL GROUP OF HEROES

defending the everyday word from magical chaos... it's a familiar trope, and this fantasy novel puts a new spin on the idea by setting it against a lurid historical backdrop.

Taking place in the 1840s, it's the tale of an organisation known as the Oversight of London, a group that safeguards the borders between the natural and the "supranatural", and which has fallen on hard times. Only five Oversight members remain alive to protect their ancient secrets, and they have plenty of enemies plotting their downfall. When an amnesiac girl with unexpected powers is found, the survivors soon come under brutal attack.

The novel sets up an intriguing world, with a pulpy combination of gothic weirdness and Dickensian squalor, but although Charlie Fletcher pulls off some likeably gothic twists, *The Oversight* doesn't



quite hang together as a story. Strongly influenced by Susannah Clarke's Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell, it's an imaginative and often well-crafted historical fantasy, but the characterisation doesn't hit home, leaving much of the cast feeling like broad caricatures, while the ambitious scale means the storytelling ultimately becomes diffuse and vague. Fletcher gets too distracted by setting up multiple plot threads for future volumes of the series, resulting in a haphazard adventure that's never quite as consistently involving or thrilling as it should be. Saxon Bullock



Fletcher has been a screenwriter for nearly 20 years; his credits include episodes of *Afterlife, Wire In The Blood* and *Taggart*.

Red Planet Blues

A Martian Marlowe

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Release Date: OUT NOW!

368 pages | £8.99 (paperback)/£4.56 (ebook) Author: Robert I Sawyer

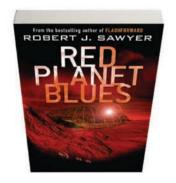
Publisher: Gollancz

EVEN WHEN HUMANITY

makes it to Mars, it seems, there will be mean streets to walk down, dames to admire and (provided there's payment at an hourly rate plus reasonable expenses involved) dark deeds to deal with. Enter gumshoe private detective Alexander Lomax, the Marlowe-like (and rather too Marlowe-lite) hero of Robert J Sawyer's latest novel.

Earth-born Lomax's home is in New Klondike, a town beneath a protective dome built on the riches to be made from digging out Red Planet fossils. However, the alien remains have become increasingly hard to find. Not that this stops hopefuls, many of whom have transferred into artificial bodies to cope better with Martian conditions, from looking for fossils – and in particular a lost Alpha Deposit.

Inevitably, Lomax's professional life, such as it is for such a

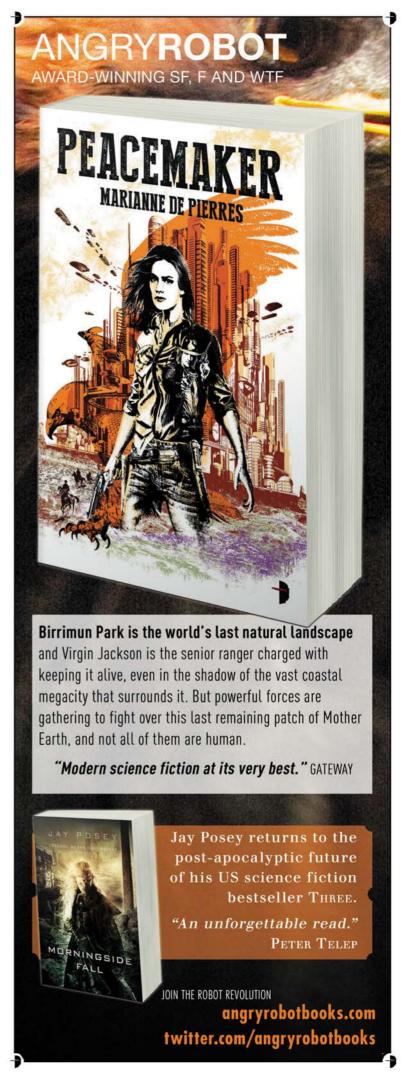


down-at-heel character, soon begins to revolve around this mother lode. It's a clever premise, but the novel doesn't live up to the strength of the central idea. In particular, the book has unresolved structural problems, a disjointedness resulting from starting life as a short story. Then there's Lomax's inability to make a decent quip. For all Sawyer makes a running gag of this, you soon start longing for some genuinely Chandleresque dry wit.

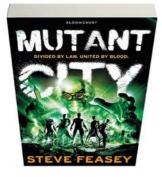
Diverting enough, but Alastair Reynolds's *Century Rain* covers similar ground in more convincing fashion. **Jonathan Wright**



Robert Sawyer wrote the series bible for another SF/crime fiction crossover, South African TV show *Charlie Jade*.







Mutant City

X-asperating

Release Date: 8 May 345 nages | £6.99 (nanerhack/ehook) Author: Steve Feasev Publisher: Rinnmshurv

WELL, THERE'S A CITY IN

it, and some mutants, but for most of this novel they're kept apart.

The mutants are the escaped subjects of an experimental genetics programme with *X-Men*-style superpowers; the city is a walled community of "pure" citizens. The mutants are drawn to the city, travelling through the ravaged, dangerous landscape.

Unfortunately much of this YA book feels aimless, because the mutants' purpose isn't clear, and the plot doesn't feel like it properly kicks in until two-thirds of the way through. This may be first-in-aseries syndrome: the book is more concerned with setting things up than telling its own story. Once it hits its stride it gets quite exciting, and the promise of the concept pays off. But it doesn't grab you early enough. Eddie Robson



Feasey's proudest achievement isn't his writing, but that he once stopped a guy jumping to his death off a bridge.



True Fire

Teen pregnancy with witches

Release Date: 1 May 400 pages | £6.99 (paperback)/£4.27 (ebook) Author: Garv Meehar Publisher: **Quercus**

You know you're

probably not reading the most original of books when a female character is described as having "sapphire eyes", "copper tresses" and "lips that promised kisses and laughter". It also doesn't help that said character, a countess named Eleanor, has a personality that's almost interchangeable with her wisecracking male co-star.

Luckily, True Fire does at least have a heroine with some gumption: a village girl named Megan who finds out she's pregnant, loses her family in a massacre and teams up with the two guys mentioned above to rescue her sister from a bunch of evil witches. While entertaining in its way, it's just a shame that nothing here is new; you've read it a million times before. More of a spark than a fire. Javne Nelson



Gary Meehan has a BA in Mathematics and Computation, an MSc in Applied Al and a PhD in Computer Science.



The Wizard's **Promise**

Not a great catch

Release Date: 1 May 336 pages | £7.99 (paperba . ack)/£5.49 (ehnok) Author: Cassandra Rose Clarke Publisher: Strange Chemistry

THE WIZARD'S PROMISE

takes us up north where it's icy and grim. Magically talented Hanna, daughter of a dusky ex-pirate and an insular Norse archetype, finds herself apprenticed to a dull fisherman. Or is she?

Do all YA heroines have to be a) whiny b) blind to their own ability and c) easily duped? Perhaps not, but Hanna certainly fits into the category. She's yet another young heroine without the steering oar of self-determination, entirely at the tidal mercies of a plot where every character refrains from telling the truth for reasons of dramatic necessity. Hanna's along for the ride as much as we are. Nice world, smooth writing, kickable heroine... it's all a bit sub-Earthsea. James Kingsley



This first part in a companion duology is set in the same world as Clarke's *The* Assassin's Curse and The Pirate's Wish



Storm

It's a bit wet

Release Date: NIIT NOW! 408 pages | £6.99 (paperback)/£4.68 (ebook) Author: Brigid Kemmerer Publisher: Much-In-Little

STORM IS STUFFED WITH

all the clichés of the supernatural romance genre ("Her eves reminded him of an ocean after a storm..."), but at least it has the originality to trade vampires, werewolves or witches for a new superhuman power: people who can control air, water, fire and earth. These Elementals are a group of boys who become tangled in the life of school gossip victim Becca (and be warned if you're touchy on such subjects: the rumours around her involve rape).

Becca is soon at the centre of a love triangle between two mysterious guys, but a few wisecracking moments aside there's really nothing to recommend this unless you're brand-new to the entire idea of "schoolgirl falls for paranormal stud". Javne Nelson



While writing *Storm*, Brigid Kemmerer was plagued with water problems, from a leaky sink to a flooded basement.

THE CITY OF SILK AND STEEL

se Date: 8 May £8.99 | Authors: Mike, Linda and Louise Carey Publisher: Gollancz



This Arabian Nights-style tale, with layers of stories within stories, shows the birth of a "city of women", after

concubines overpower their captors and bring their ideas of a more equal society to life We said: "A captivating book that carries you along on an enjoyable and entertaining journey."

DOCTOR SLEEP

se Date: 22 May £7.99 | Author: Stenhen King Publisher: Hodder Paperbacks



This seguel to The Shining follows a grown-up Danny Torrance as he strives to save a girl with powers like his own

from the True Knot, oldsters who torture psychic children to death in order to eat their essence. We said: "King writes masterfully, as always. Torrance Jr is King's best alcoholic yet, and the True Knot are great monsters, sympathetic yet unwholesome and damned."

THE METHOD

se Date: 1 May £8.99 | Author: Juli Zeh Publisher: Vintage



Failure to take every precaution against disease is a crime in this cult German author's tale of a

future 50 years from now that's clean and safe, but that you wouldn't actually want to live in. We said: "Warning: this is a literary novel. It doesn't fill in the gaps or follow Hollywood rules, and is constructed like a Chinese puzzle. Also, the twist at the end is a little too pat.

THE SUICIDE EXHIBITION

se Date: 1 May





Set in 1941, this first entry in the Never War series sees a Foreign Office dogsbody and a pilot teaming up to

investigate strange goings on, and features cameos by the likes of Heinrich Himmler and occultist Aleister Crowley. We said: "Unfortunately, this solid detail rather underlines the book's daft implausibilities. The plot also

seems pretty standard stuff."

TERRA

elease Date: 8 May £8 99 | Author: Mitch Renn Publisher: Gollancz



Reminiscent of Douglas Adams Roald Dahl and Terry Pratchett, comedian Mitch Benn's debut novel concerns a

12-year-old girl, raised by an alien, who's going to school for the first time. We said: "Engagingly written and a lot of fun... a charming tale of childhood. parenting, and finding your place in the world." Follow-up Terra's World is due out on 17 July.







Comics: A Global History, 1968 To The Present

Pretentious? Moi?

Release Date: 5 May 304 pages | £19.95 (paperback) Authors: Dan Mazur, Alexander Danner Publisher: Thames & Hudson

THE WORLD IS A BIG

place, 45 years is a long time, and this book is just 304 pages long. It may be lucky, then, that it focuses mainly on the US, Japan and France, and on underground, alternative and avant-garde comix.

Sadly, it's still too sweeping, and not just in scope. It's packed with throwaway judgements and thick with jargon, but often the connections drawn are tenuous and evidence lacking. We're told, for example, that Jacques Tardi's "ornately patterned interiors recall Vuillard". Does this mean the comic artist quotes or riffs off the post-impressionist painter (which tells us about his aspirations) or just that the authors studied art history



(which tells us about their pretensions)? There's a lot of stilted twaddle, and a few paragraphs of gibberish that look like cut-and-paste blunders. There are glaring omissions too, and some silly errors.

There are insights to be gleaned here, sure, and gems to discover. So buy the book, scour it for these, and send the authors feedback. Given another year of work, a more accurate title, plus about 100 pages more nuance and depth, the second edition could be the illuminating overview this isn't. Alex Summersby



Apparently, Jack Kirby's later works can be seen as "the superhero version of Monet's water lillies."

Peacemaker

Virgin territory

<u>***</u>

Release Date: 1 May
415 pages | £8.99 (paperback)/£5.49 (ebook)
Author: Marianne de Pierres
Publisher: Angry Rohot

SOME PEOPLE LIKE TO

keep their genres pure – magic in this fantasy box over here, future worlds in that SF box over there... If you're one of these people, then *Peacemaker* isn't for you. A mixture of Western, detective story, urban fantasy and noirish dystopia, this is a book that really doesn't want to fit in a box.

Virgin Jackson is a Park
Ranger, guardian of some of the
last natural habitat in a future
Australia, escaping from the
sprawling city into a refuge of
space, sand and soil – and
keeping it nice for the tourists, of
course. Fiercely independent,
she's not happy to be partnered
with US Marshall Nate Sixkiller
when her boss decides she needs
extra help chasing drug runners.
He comes in handy, though,
when people start dying around
her, the police think she's



involved and a hallucinated eagle she hasn't seen in years turns up at her apartment...

Virgin is a well-realised if frustrating heroine – she's stubborn, suspicious and often makes stupid decisions. She demands to be taken seriously and is passionate about her job and anything that might be threatening the sanctuary of the park. The story itself is overdone at times, with plot developments often a little too convenient, but it's still good to see something – like Virgin – so determined to be itself. **Rhian Drinkwater**



There's also a comic on the way, but de Pierres says it will follow a different, more episodic story arc than the novel.



Vengeful Spirit

A Horus Heresy highlight

Release Date: 3 May
544 pages | £25 (hardback)
Author: Graham McNeill
Publisher: The Black Library

BOOK 29 OF THE HORUS

Heresy throws us into the midst of a massive – but at first glance insignificant – battle in the historic war between the Imperium and its fallen antihero the Warmaster Horus, as the Sons of Horus return to fight their Space Marine brethren for possession of the planet of Molech.

This world may seem like just another step on the path to Terra, but the Emperor has it defended with a vast Imperial army, and Horus dedicates far more attention towards it than seems necessary. As the book unfolds it soon becomes clear that Molech is worth far more than expected...

Vengeful Spirit stands out as one of those gems that long-running franchise serials sometimes produce, displaying a prodigious and complexly nuanced understanding of the Warhammer universe that few writers other than Graham McNeill could bring to the telling.

Alongside the setpiece battle sequences, the author crafts a revenge subplot and low-key character work that help set the book apart in terms of quality and depth. McNeill takes the Horus Heresy to new heights by throwing an unexpected twist into the building confrontation between the Emperor of Mankind and Horus, including a startling insight into the Warmaster's psychology.

A must-read – even for those readers unfamiliar with the Horus Heresy series as a whole.

Damien Walter

Vengeful Spirit is about 50,000 words longer than most Horus Heresy novels, and includes four illustrations.

THE TICK UST

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SON OF THE MORNING
Angels feature in this tale of an alternate Hundred Years War.

ANNIHILATION
An expedition visits the mysterious "Area X" in Jeff VanderMeer's unnervingly creepy novel.

YARRICK: IMPERIAL CREED

This Warhammer book balances battle with philosophical insight.

DESCENT
Ken MacLeod tries his hand at "bloke-lit" in this tale of alien abduction.

5 A NATURAL HISTORY OF DRAGONS A naturalist investigates dragons

A naturalist investigates dragons in Marie Brennan's yarn.

Japanese book featuring photos of steampunk art and crafting guides.

LAGOON
An alien spaceship transforms the sea creatures of Nigeria in Nnedi Okorafor's latest.

THE EMPIRE OF TIME
David Wingrove's latest
concerns a time war waged
across millennia.

FORTUNE'S PAWN
Rachel Bach's space opera
focuses on female mercenary
Devi Morris.

THE TROOP
Boy scouts encounter an emaciated "Hungry Man" in Nick Cutter's horror.

THE RULES: New releases push down old releases. Books drop out of the chart after three months.



THE ART OF MILLARWORLD Release Date: OUT NOW!

£29.99 | 200 pages (hardback)
Editor: Jennifer Lee | Publisher: Image Comics

A collection of cover art from Mark Millar's creator-owned comics, from Wanted to Starlight.

© Each of the ten sections kicks off with a short interview with one of Millar's artistic collaborators. All big up the writer's enthusiasm and

strong visual sense.

A good way for hardcore fans to score a heap of eye-catching imagery without spending a bomb on variant covers and trade collections.

A pricey signed, numbered edition is also available (250 copies only).



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The world's leading comics artists reveal how they create professional comic art in easy-to-follow steps.



Rated

GOOK CLUG 100

The Savage Tales Of Solomon Kane

Robert E Howard, (Del Rey, 1998)

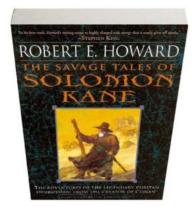
Writer Clifford Beal considers Conan's Puritan stablemate

ROBERT E HOWARD, WHO

took his own life at the age of 30, was the father of that subgenre of fantasy that would become known as "sword and sorcery". Best known as the creator of Conan the Barbarian, Howard's writings influenced a generation of fantasy authors, including Fritz Leiber and David Gemmell

But before Conan, Howard had created a very different character in Solomon Kane, a mysterious Puritan loner who roams the darker corners of the world, fighting ancient and nameless evil in the early 17th century. Bursting from the pages of Weird Tales in 1928, Solomon Kane fought Lovecraft-inspired deities, demons, pirates and scores of hostile natives to rescue the helpless and right wrong wherever he saw it. Kane is far more conflicted and layered a character than Conan, and Howard portrays him as driven, if not downright psychopathic. In "The Blue Flame Of Vengeance" Kane remarks to a man he is helping: "It hath been my duty in times past to ease various evil men of their lives..." Which is an understatement.

To be sure, this is *pulp* fiction. You won't find subplots or shades of grey here, and since these are largely short stories there is a definite headlong rush to get down to the business at hand. usually involving a good amount of swordplay and spilt blood. Anachronisms and cod "olde world" dialogue sometimes sound a sour note, but at its best, Howard's writing is dazzlingly energetic, vivid and not without poetry. His descriptions of hand-to-hand fighting are compelling as they are brutal but even here there is a mastery of mood and intensity. In one



You won't find subplots or shades of grey here

scene, Howard's imagery is chilling: an avenging Kane overpowers a murderous pirate in a knife fight and intentionally kills him by degrees, plunging in the tip of his dagger, one inch at a time.

Yet there's a darker side to the swashbuckling. Racial stereotyping was always present in pulp fiction and Asian or African physical features were often used as shorthand for moral turpitude and inferiority. Sadly, much of the

writing in Solomon Kane follows this path. A few of the better-known tales such as "The Moon Of Skulls" are set in central Africa, where Kane encounters the remnants of an ancient civilisation ruled over by brutish savages. And here, black skin colour is equated with degenerate evil, with Kane portrayed as a white saviour intent on toppling the evil African queen Nekari. Even the last survivor of Atlantis, whom Kane tries to free from bondage, is worried about his ethnic purity: "I, the last son of Atlantis, bear in my veins the taint of Negro blood."

But Howard and his characters are full of contradictions. Solomon Kane's self-professed "blood brother" is a black African wizard and the only real friend that Kane has in any of the stories. And in "The Footfalls Within" Kane risks his life to free African villagers from Arab slavers and then guides them to safety.

Solomon Kane's tales are, like those of Conan, rousing epics, and as part of our pulp-era inheritance they deserve to be read. But like much of our past, it's not all good. Today Howard's writing, imaginative as it is, leaves a slightly bitter aftertaste.

Clifford Beal is the author of the 17th century historical fantasy Gideon's Angel. His latest novel, The Raven's Banquet, is out from Solaris in May.

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE!

by Robert E Howard Howard's other great hero, Conan of Cimmeria, strides like a giant across the Hyborian Age, a richly imagined val world set in Earth's prehistory



Swords And Deviltry by Fritz Leiber (1970) Leiber's brilliant Lankhmar stories follow the adventures of seven-foot barbarian Fafhrd and his shorter but lightning-quick companion the Grey Mouser, master thief



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ONLY FORWARD

by Michael Marshall Smith That's being covered by fantasy author Lou Morgan and you'll find it in this part of the mag next issue.

MOONDIAL

by Helen Cresswell Sophia McDougall will be covering this children's novel for us in our anniversary issue

DARK EDEN

by Chris Beckett

Adrian Tchaikovsky is the essay writer for this one, so pick up a copy soon so you don't miss out.

Once you've read the book, head to our forum or Facebook page to join the discussion. Just let us know what you thought of the book, and whether it matched up to your expectations. What was the best bit? What was the worst? If you're rereading something you first read in your childhood, tell us if years have been kind

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The Sandman: Overture

Dream on

Release Date: OUT NOW! \$4 99 | Publisher: Vertino

Writer: Neil Gaiman Artist: JH Williams III



WHEN VERTIGO

relaunched last year, it surprised many by bringing out its biggest gun: The Sandman. Not a spin-off by another

writer, or a collection of ephemera, but a proper new Sandman book written by the actual Neil Gaiman. You still encounter a lot of people who've read The Sandman but few, if any, other comics, and over the last 25 years it's been regularly repackaged. It's a monolith in comics history. Can it have the same impact again?

Well, no. You can't recapture the original moment that produced The Sandman. But it's exciting to have Gaiman back in comics - between his novels, screenplays and episodes of Doctor Who, he hasn't had much time for the form since The Sandman ended - and he has found a perfect collaborator in JH Williams. The

result feels of a piece with Gaiman's earlier series - not groundbreaking, because it's 25 years later, but a welcome reminder of why that era's comics were so compelling.

Overture is a prequel, which we're promised will answer the question of how Morpheus (the titular Sandman, for the uninitiated) was able to be captured in Sandman issue one. But it's more than just footling around on

The Sandman is a monolith in **comics** history

an old plothole: it's a journey of vast scope, taking in a threat to Morpheus and to the entire universe. Gaiman has always been good at outlining epic concepts in an offhand manner, and here we discover that a star has gone mad, and that this madness could infect the whole of creation.

The first two issues of this six-part series involve a lot of mysterious

conversations between strange and sinister figures without much apparently happening - but they're no less interesting for that. The high point is undoubtedly a sequence where Morpheus meets dozens of alternative versions of himself, who have gathered to work out what the hell is going on. This is beautifully realised by Williams, in a gatefold spread that feels like a fresh piece of world-building for The Sandman. And it works for new readers, rather than trading on familiarity.

The series was announced as bi-monthly, but to nobody's great surprise it hasn't kept up that schedule - Gaiman has other things to do, and Williams's style is labour-intensive. It's been five months between the first two issues. But the way it's shaping up, when it's finished it will form a worthy volume to slot at the front of your Sandman collection. Or at the end. depending on how you file these things... Eddie Robson

Jack Thorne, creator of *The Fades*, has completed a screenplay of Gaiman's *The Ocean At The End Of The Lane*.



The Amazing Spider-Man: Family Business

Release Date: OUT NOW!

112 pages | £18.99 (hardback) | Publisher: Marvel Writers: Mark Waid, James Robinson Artists: Gabrielle Dell'Otto. Werther Dell'Edera



THIS NEW

Spidev graphic novel seems standard fare at first, but then it tosses a grenade in: Peter Parker has a

sister! And she's a CIA agent, like his parents were! The newly revealed Teresa Parker then drags Peter into a mash-up of James Bond and Indiana Jones, taking in a Monaco casino, a Swiss ski lodge and a load of Nazi gold in Cairo.

Despite the presence of the Kingpin as an antagonist, the result doesn't feel much like a Spider-Man story. Peter busts the costume out a couple of times, but outside the urban environment he seems a little lost, tagging along with someone else's plot. This impression is compounded by Gabrielle Dell'Otto and Werther Dell'Edera's art - it looks great, and their character design for Teresa is spot-on, but it doesn't look very Spider-Man. He's a bright pop-art hero, and delicate painted artwork isn't the optimum way to present him.

Still, all credit for trying to do something different with Spider-Man, and let's judge this for what it is: an entertaining book, carried off with panache, which disrupts some of Peter's basic assumptions about himself. It's hard to say much more without blowing the plot, but suffice to say this story is not as seismic as it first appears - and although you can see why it has to be this way, the overall effect is underwhelming.

Eddie Robson



In 2002, in the novel Secret Of The Sinister Six, Spidey believed a mutant called Pity was his long-lost sister.



Afterlife With Archie

Resurrection in Riverdale

Release Date: OUT NOW!

\$2.99 | Publisher: Archie Writer: Roberto Amuirre-Sacasa Artist: Francesco Francavilla



CENTRED

around perennial teenager Archie Andrews, Archie Comics have provided a refreshing alternative

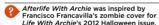
to Marvel and DC's superheroics since 1941. However with their Happy Days-esque tales of high school hijinks now hopelessly dated, the New York company has recently attempted to usher Archie and the other residents of the fictional town of Riverdale into the 21st century.



While Kevin Keller's gay kiss has garnered headlines, Afterlife With Archie's bold foray into horror territory should prove to be their most radical move vet.

It begins with the precocious Sabrina the Teenage Witch inadvertently unleashing an undead epidemic upon Riverdale after she foolishly resurrects pet pooch Hot Dog. Writer Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa wryly subverts the traditional wholesomeness of the Archie-verse, gleefully turning stalwarts like Jughead into flesh-eating monsters and ruthlessly despatching several other firm favourites in the first four issues alone. Aguire-Sacasa's frantically paced script is deftly brought to life by Francisco Francavilla, whose sleek, David Mazzacchelli-style linework is evocatively enhanced by his earthy colours. Even the cover design has a retro EC Comics feel.

As an ongoing monthly rather than a limited run, it's difficult to see how such exhilarating momentum can be maintained indefinitely. But with the toorapidly sidelined Sabrina due to return and other popular Archie properties such as Josie and the Pussycats yet to make their bow, you should just go along for the ride. Stephen Jewell



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Empire Of The Dead

Romero's return

Release Date: OUT NOW!

\$3.99 | Publisher: Marvel Writer: George Romero



GEORGE ROMERO

grew up reading horror comics - he's said it was the main medium that taught him storytelling. The fact

that he's finally written a major one, at the age of 73, is one of the elements that makes Empire Of The Dead such a pleasure to read.

It's not as groundbreaking as Night Of The Living Dead, but that did invent a genre. And there are elements that feel like coloured-in pages from The Walking Dead, which is a shame.

But there's still significant originality here. Lest we forget, George didn't just invent zombie movies; he also directed one of the great vampire flicks - Martin. Here he combines the two, seamlessly introducing blood-gulpers to his usual flesh-chomping set-up. Our human heroes have to contend with an evolving zombie army and a political elite comprised of vampires (Romero hasn't lost his satirical bite) while surviving in a postazombalyptic NYC.

Romero would like Empire to become a movie. If it does, we hope it's animated so that Alex Maleev's beautiful artwork can be retained. But forget films, this is a great comic. And as long as Romero writes it, we'll be reading. Sam Ashurst



Empire was always intended as a comic. George was already writing it when Marvel approached him to collaborate.





The Elder Scrolls Online

Lost in translation

Release Date: OUT NOW!

£49.99 | Format reviewed: PC Also available on: Mac, PS4, Xbox One Publisher Rethesda



THE ELDER

Scrolls games have always been about places first and people second. Bit by bit, over 20 years, Bethesda have

mapped out the corners of their legendary fantasy world. From the dungeons of Daggerfall to Skyrim's icy reaches, these games have always been about the journey, not the destination; which is a good thing, because the destination is usually an Orc with the personality of a potato.

The Elder Scrolls Online is the first time the continent of Tamriel has been delivered wholesale rather than piecemeal - and it's also the first time that it's been possible to explore the world with friends. But this MMORPG loses something in the

translation. Areas are flat, drawdistances are short, and your freedom of exploration is truncated by a faction system that binds you to a particular part of Tamriel on a character-by-character basis.

There's plot, but limited animations and inconsistent voice acting make it difficult to get invested in it. The game allows you to explore parts of the Elder Scrolls lore that you'll have read about in other games, but unfortunately the technical limitations of MMORPGs prevent these discoveries from being as impressive as they otherwise might be.

Similarly, the strictures of MMORPG design mean you won't be doing anything that could upset the



game for other players. That means no murder, and no theft.

That's the bad stuff - and it'll chiefly concern Elder Scrolls veterans. Once you're over that initial disappointment, there's a decent MMORPG here. Combat requires speed, accuracy and skill, and a flexible character customisation system allows for considerable creativity. You can mix and match armour and weaponry with different schools of magic to create, say, a stealthy dual-wielding mage or a heavy fighter who switches to a bow for player vs player combat.

It's this competitive side that gives the game real legs. Massive three-way battles take place in the central province of Cyrodiil as factions fight over a network of fortresses - think Guild Wars 2 or Planetside 2 and you won't be wide of the mark. The Elder Scrolls Online has potential for MMORPG experts that it lacks for long-time series fans. If you're wondering whether to commit to the asking price as well as an £8.99 monthly subscription, first figure out what side of that divide vou're on. Chris Thursten



This is a prequel, set hundreds of years before Skyrim. If you know your lore, you'll meet some familiar faces.

Metal Gear Solid V: Ground Zeroes

Pain and gain

Release Date: OUT NOW!

£19.99 | Format reviewed: PS4 Also available on: Xbox One. Xbox 360. PS3



THE LATEST

entry in Hideo Kojima's legendary Metal Gear Solid series isn't the full-fat Big Boss adventure

you might be hoping for - that comes next year in The Phantom Pain. Ground Zeroes is a prologue which introduces the open-world gameplay The Phantom Pain will use to shake up the series' traditionally linear level design.

Set on one compact map, it's a direct sequel to Peace Walker, and sees Big Boss (controversially voiced by Kiefer Sutherland rather than David Hayter) infiltrate a base to rescue two captured assets.

The main mission can be finished in around an hour on your first go. with four varied side missions taking around half an hour each.



The short story length (there are just two cutscenes) and fairly hefty RRP are only an issue if you're not interested in playing through the game more than once. Ground Zeroes, however, has been built with replay value in mind. Slick new stealth mechanics, dozens of options for tackling objectives and challenging enemy AI encourage experimentation, while hidden collectables and secrets offer a substantial overall package.

It's also jaw-droppingly gorgeous on current-gen consoles (especially PS4), with different missions set at different times of day to show off Fox Engine's impressive weather effects. At the very least it serves as a tantalising appetiser for The Phantom Pain. Jordan Farley



Collect all the XOF patches to unlock a console-exclusive mission - Déjà Vu on PlayStation, or Jamais Vu on Xbox.

Titanfall

Mechs-generation warfare



Release Date: OUT NOW! £49.99 | Format reviewed: Xbox One Also available on: PC and Xbox 360 Publisher: EA



THOUGH ITS TV

ads do their utmost to paint it as a cheesy straight-to-DVD sequel to Real Steel, Titanfall is a landmark

next-generation release.

The first game from Respawn Entertainment (the team formerly known as Infinity Ward), it's a multiplayer-only futuristic shooter where players can wall-run and double-jump their way across maps in seconds like Peter Parker, or leap into weaponised Power Loaders and Hulk Smash their way through groups of enemies.

There's no single player mode. Instead, an insipid military-vsrebellion story is spread over nine maps and two modes supporting just six-on-six player matches, numbers bolstered with non-story content across six additional maps and three extra modes. It's slim pickings given



the restricted player count, and updates are still being rolled out to rectify some ineffective matchmaking. but Titanfall's moment-to-moment combat experience overshadows these limitations.

Matches are fast and furious thanks to the ability to drop Titans from the sky and leap in and out of the walking tanks on the move. Crucially, pilot-vs-mech combat isn't unbalanced, and AI Grunts give you plenty to shoot when other players aren't around. Throw in some novel weapons and temporary skill boosts tied into match objectives and Titanfall manages to mask its limited content by offering plenty of watercooler moments, alongside an unending stream of meta-goals and rewards. Matthew Pellett



Console-wise, *Titanfall* is an Xbox exclusive, but future instalments ar highly likely to be PlayStation-bou



Facing evil once more

Moonflesh

Release Date: OUT NOW!

105 minutes | £14.99 (CD)/£12.99 (download) Publisher: Rin Finish

The Evil One

Release Date: OUT NOW! 59 minutes | £10.99 (CD)/£8.99 (download)

The Companion Chronicles: The **War To End All Wars**

Release Date: OUT NOW! 65 minutes | £8.99 (CD)/£7.99 (download) Publisher: Bia Finish

OF ALL THE THREATS YOU

could possibly face after landing the TARDIS in Suffolk, being attacked by a lion probably isn't one you'd

expect. But that's what happens to the Fifth Doctor and Nyssa in Moonflesh, when they stumble into a British explorer's private hunting ground, in 1911.

Nathaniel Whitlock has gathered a group for a weekend's shooting, but unsurprisingly things aren't about to go to plan. Problems centre around the Moonflesh, a strange mineral owned by Silver Crow, a Native American who works for Whitlock. When one of the party tries to damage the Moonflesh, a parasitic energy creature is unleashed on the group - and it's not alone...

The story itself is a little too predictable, and the "spirit realm" nature of the climax leaves you feeling a tad unsatisfied, but this is a story populated by big, bold characters who are fun to listen to.

Over in the Fourth Doctor range, the Doctor and Leela have stumbled upon the Moray Rose, a space-faring Mary Celeste that's the latest in a line of ships to be mysteriously stripped of all crew and cargo. They're joined by Intergalactic

Companion Chronicles' "narrated flashback" style often work best when there's a story being told in the present that's as interesting as the one from the past being recounted. Sixties companion Steven Taylor (Peter Purves) left the Doctor at the end of "The Savages" to rule the new society they'd helped create. In The War To End All Wars, an aged Steven sits in a cell explaining how his experiences fighting on a world called Comfort affected his decisions as king. The twists in the flashback are a little too obvious, but the hints at developments in the "present" time are intriguing and

the plot, while intriguing to begin

use of Leela's guilt about her dad,

with, doesn't amount to much. The

who died to save her, works well, but

the reuse of the Xoanon mythology

moment at the end, though, as Leela

finally talks to the Doctor about her

seems confused. There's a lovely

memories of her father.

The conventions of The

Policeman Calvert

soon becomes apparent that metallic insectoids the

Salonu are behind the deaths

(Michael Keating), and it

Also out: a four-story series seven box set of *Who* spin-off *Jago & Litefoot* (£30 CD/£25 download).

add welcome depth to the story as

a whole. Rhian Drinkwater



Firefly

Chapter and 'Verse

Release Date: OUT NOW! \$49.99 (hardback and PDF)/\$19.99 (PDF only) Publisher: Margaret Weis Productions

FIREFLY IS THE MOST lamented of SF series, the topic of wistful what-might-have-been conversations for fans. This RPG. from the stables of Margaret "Dragonlance" Weis, at least gives

you the chance to carry on the adventure for yourself.

As usual with tie-in RPGs, there's plenty of information here that will appeal to gamers and non-gamers alike, not least a detailed breakdown of human space in the 26th century. In these pages you'll find out, for example, how many star systems the "Verse" comprises - something the show always left ambiguous.

The book overreaches itself by presenting everything in cod-future-Wild-West speak, though - good old modern English, we find, is the best way of getting rules across. It's structured in a topsy-turvy way too, with the actual mechanics of the game not coming until you're deep in. Instead, the love of the show trumps all things, including convenience. A comprehensive episode breakdown up front provides a scaffold for rules examples - a pretty nifty way of getting the point across, but without actually telling us what the rules are it is confounding.

The rules, once collated and digested from their scattered presentations, create a proprietary system that unusually doesn't follow either the D20 or FATE rulesets. Though complex, it's geared nicely to storytelling, but is perhaps a game best suited to experienced RPGers. Guy Haley

There are five solar systems in the 'Verse, but all are binaries or trinaries, so there are actually a dozen suns in all.



Box Of Delights

What we've been playing with this month

Fourth Doctor Water Bottle

Bif Bang Pow! | Height: 25cm | RRP: £19.99 | FPI Price: £16.99 | Catalogue number: B8020

Is that really the Fourth Doctor's scarf wrapped around this steel recepticle? We're not sure whether it's an authentic replication of one of Tom Baker's dangling accessories, it looks like it could be any old bozo's. At least stick the curly-haired Time Lord's beaming fizzog on it! It comes with a clip that allows you to latch it to your trews, though we can't help thinking it's a little on the big side to be doing that with. Still, different strokes...

The Walking Dead Action Figures

McFarlane Toys | Height: 13cm | RRP: £16.99 each | FPI Price: £14.99 each

Out of the flames stagger five new figures to tie in with the most recent season of the show. The Merle Walker comes with 22 points of articulation, impressively. There's a similarly poseable Tyreese figure, and a charred dead 'un, but best of all is young Glenn, who comes with a spare head featuring a bloody eye and messed-up hair. Well, it's hard to keep that salon look while fighting off the undead with a length of pipe. You can also get a Maggie figure with an assault rifle (not pictured).

Doctor Who Ceramic Coaster Set

BBC Worldwide | Width: 10cm | FPI price: £19.99 | Catalogue number: B6265

Dying for a mug of tea but wary of scuffing your TARDIS console? No, of course you don't care about such fripperies – you're saving the Earth from the tentacled Slime-Bastards of Krong. But if your life is a little less fraught than the Doctor's simply reach for this shiny set of coasters, whose designs bring a pop art touch to the TARDIS, the Cybermen and the Daleks.

Wampa Talking Plush

Underground Toys | Height: 22cm | RRP: £16.99 | FPI Price: £14.99 | Catalogue number: B3396

We reckon Luke Skywalker would have thought twice before slicing off the Wampa's arm if he'd looked like this – he's so damn cute and fluffy! His growl has an authentic Wampa accent, though. Best of all, his right arm is removeable, allowing you to recreate his most famous moment. It even leaves behind a red (and perfectly square) Velcro wound.



THREE OF A KIND

Doctor Who Cufflinks



IAKVIS

£14.99 | www.forbiddenplanet.co.uk

The ideal gift for the man who has everything, save a satisfactory way of securing his flapping cuffs. They come in chrome with a matt finish – two words that still make us feel a little bit tearful.



BOW TIES ARE COOL £14.99 | www.forbiddenplanet.co.uk

Sorry kids, but this isn't true any more. Now Matt's vacated the role, his signature neckwear is once more something you associate with Frank Muir. Naked collars, Capaldi-style are where it's at now.



CYBERMAN £14.99 | www.forbiddenplanet.co.uk

A cufflink set based on the sonic screwdriver is also on the way. All come in a TARDIS-blue gift box embossed with a silver *Who* logo. If you get lonely, you could pretend these little chaps are Handles.



TOYS & COLLECTABLES



1410GS 10 COME



SMARTPHONE K-9

ETA: AUGUST

This remote-control K-9 can be controlled using an app on your phone or tablet (Apple or Android). As well as moving him around you can wiggle his ears, extend his nose-gun, and make him bark one of eight phrases. Only disappointment: he's a bit on the wee side. Watch a video of K-9 in action at http://bit.ly/K9phone. A smartphone Dalek's on the way too!



LI'L GOTHAM FIGURES

ETA: OCTOBER

Dustin Nguyen's all-ages series for DC Comics (which came to a close back in January of this year) featured a highly stylised take on the heroes and villains of Gotham. Now it's inspired a figure range from DC Collectibles. The first wave of four features cutesy versions of Batman, the Joker, Robin and Harley Quinn. Awwww, ain't they sweet?



VIPER VS RAIDER SNOW GLOBE

ETA: NOVEMBER

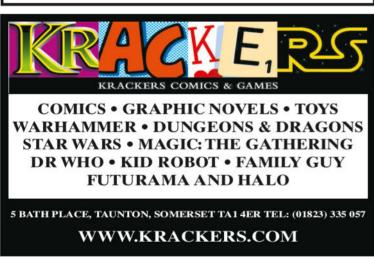
Bif Bang Pow! is behind this quirky ornament inspired by the original 1978 Battlestar Galactica. Inside the 5" diameter globe (which rests on a Cylon-head stand) is a dogfight in miniature between a Colonial Viper and a Cylon Raider. And, er, lots of snow, obviously. Also on their way: retro-style figures of Adama's daughter Athena and Baltar's robot assistant Lucifer.



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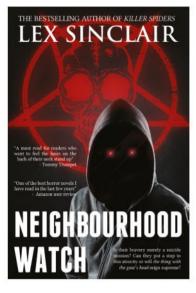


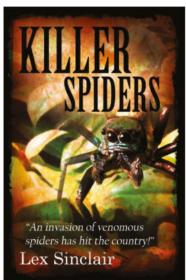


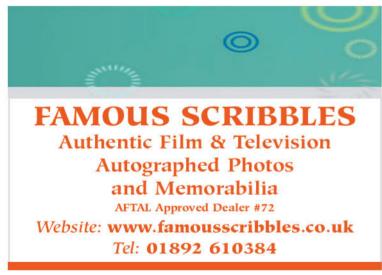


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Where will TV be in a few years time? As someone who watches more telly than can possibly be good for him, this is something I

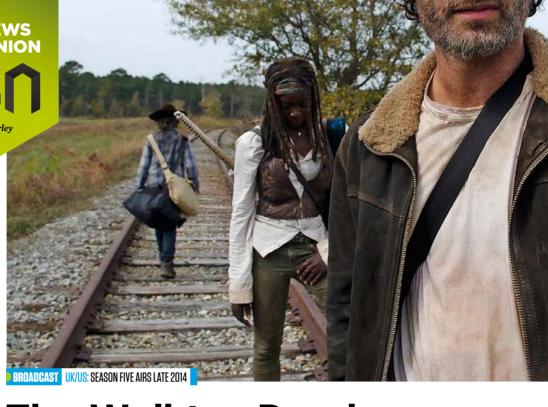
think about a fair bit. If a raft of recent announcements is anything to go by it'll be online, on demand and more fragmented than ever.

BBC Three is going web-only, which saddens me because I don't think shows like *Being Human* and *In The Flesh* could have found the same level of success without a terrestrial broadcast, and that doesn't bode well for the future of sci-fi on the channel.

It's entering treacherous waters too, as more and more services fight for a share of your time. Netflix and Amazon are both content producers now with their own exclusive series. A Netflix subscription will be essential come 2015 when Marvel start airing their five new superhero shows. Sony and Microsoft have also decided it's time their respective games consoles start producing original content with a Halo series on Xbox and a Powers series on PlayStation, Xbox Entertainment Studios also recently announced plans to team with Channel 4 to remake the Swedish show Humans

It won't stop there. How long before the countless catch up services around the globe are all producing their own original programming too?

Until the UK has the infrastructure to support reliable streaming, the ambitions of online content producers will never be realised. But one thing is clear – if you want to keep up with everything in the future, make space for a lot of internet-enabled boxes under your TV. Jordan Farley



The Walking Dead

Season four gets the SFX Scriptease treatment

PREVIOUSLY ON THE WALKING DEAD

Rick's gang defeated The Governor and invited the residents of Woodbury to live with them. Life is good, er, except for the zombies.

ACT ONE

RICK has become a PIG FARMER. Unfortunately one of the pigs is SICK. CARL: Can I kill her? I like killing things now! RICK [ominously]: You shouldn't name the things you're gonna kill.

CAROL is secretly teaching ADORABLE MIKA and LIZZIE, who's DEFINITELY NOT A PSYCHO, how to use KNIVES.

CAROL: This couldn't possibly backfire.

UNIMPORTANT PEOPLE start dying from the flu. HERSHEL takes care of them.

HERSHEL: Boring Bob, you get medicine. I'll quarantine the infected in A Block.

The undead overrun A BLOCK

HERSHEL: I'll only kill zombies if it's the nice thing to do. Which in this case, it is.

ACT THREE

THE GOVERNOR gets rebooted into an EVEN BIGGER BASTARD. And persuades some

random people to attack the prison using a TANK they have for reasons.

THE GOVERNOR: Get out of my prison or I'll kill beardy! RICK: But we can all live together. I promise not to kill you in your sleep!

THE GOVERNOR: Liar!
THE GOVERNOR cuts
HERSHEL'S head off with
MICHONNE'S sword.

THE AUDIENCE [crying]: Shoot his other eye out Rick! THE GOVERNOR is stabbed in the back by MICHONNE. Meanwhile ultimate badass

DARYL blows up a tank single-handedly.

THE AUDIENCE: BEST. EPISODE. EVER. ACT FOUR

The gang has been SPLIT UP. MICHONNE has a WEIRD DREAM and RICK kills a BANDIT. Elsewhere, BETH gets KIDNAPPED and GLENN meets a man with a MULLET who claims to know how the apocalypse started.

BONUS FEATURES

- **Natings:** With 16.11 million viewers in America, the season four premiere is still the most-watched drama series cable broadcast in TV history.
- Food For Thought: The snake that Beth and Daryl ate during "Alone" was actually an eel.
- Did You Spot? In "Us" Day Of The Dead's Bub cameos during the train tunnel scene.
- Nitpick: Wouldn't Rick and co have been wise to properly scope out Terminus rather than piling in after five minutes?
- Dest Line: Daryl: "I ain't gonna have your first drink be no damn peach schnapps!"





GLENN: Save the world? Nah. I'm gonna find Maggie. This Terminus place sounds like a safe bet.

CAROL and TYREESE are looking after JUDITH, ADORABLE MIKA and LIZZIE, who's DEFINITELY NOT A PSYCHO.

TYREESE: We should stay in this house forever. LIZZIE kills ADORABLE MIKA, her own sister. Turns out LIZZIE is a PSYCHO.

CAROL: LOOK AT THE FLOWERS.

THE AUDIENCE: Holy shit.

ACT FIVE

The BANDITS catch up with RICK, MICHONNE and CARL. JOE is their leader.

JOE: We're gonna kill you now.

RICK: If sex pest over there doesn't take his hands off Carl things are gonna get nasty.

SEX PEST doesn't take his hands off CARL. RICK tears JOE'S throat out with his TEETH.

THE AUDIENCE: Holy shit.

CARL: I'll never kill again.

ACT SIX

GLENN and MAGGIE have been reunited. RICK's group meets GARETH, leader at TERMINUS.

RICK: I don't trust you.

GARETH: That's okay. Want some, er, food? RICK sees someone has HERSHEL'S pocket-watch. Turns out it was a TRAP all along.

GARETH: Ringleader, Archer, Samurai, Boy: get in the cage.

THE AUDIENCE: "You shouldn't name the things you're gonna kill!" No!

RICK: They're screwing with the wrong people. **THE AUDIENCE**: "Screwing"? What is this, *Survivors*?

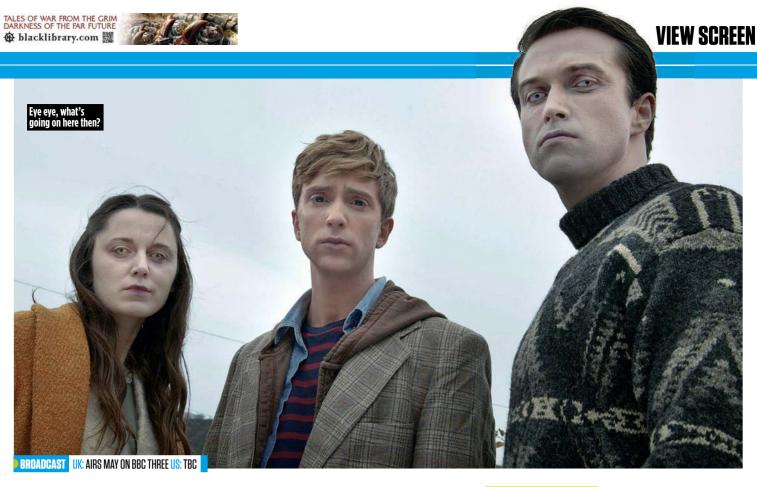
ENDS Jordan Farley



MANKIND'S FIRST STEPS INTO A HOSTILE '4X' UNIVERSE



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In The Flesh

Expanding horizons

HEN THEY BURY BBC Three in 2015, it's a safe bet that one of the few shows that'll manage to crawl from its grave will be Dominic Mitchell's In The Flesh, the zombie drama that is most certainly not Danny Dyer: I Believe In UFOs.

Set in the fictional village of Roarton in the aftermath of a zombie apocalypse, its opening three-parter - broadcast last year - followed the story of medically reformed "rotter" Kieren Walker (Luke Newberry), and his reintegration not only into a family that had lost him to suicide, but a local community. The result was one of television's most subtle, sensitive depictions of prejudice, sexual identity and the devastating effect of suicide.

Having only three episodes to play with, Mitchell wisely contained its drama to Roarton. Series two's opening episode, however (the first of six), suggests that In The Flesh is building upon what was merely hinted at before; its very first sequence has a grisly undead terrorist attack upon a city tram.

Moving the action away from Roarton is a rarity, though, Instead, its wider aspects come in the form of how the small village is caught up in the grand plans of external forces. These are manifested by two new characters: Maxine Martin (Wunmi Mosaku), an MP of anti-zombie party Victus, and Simon (Emmett Scanlan), a charismatic disciple of the Undead Prophet.

The obvious theme is civil rights; a huge development from series one's domestic

BONUS FEATURES

- Star Turn: Luke Newberry continues to bring sombre nuance and likeable charm to the role of reformed zombie
- Speculation: We're gonna go ahead and guess that poor Kieren will never make it to Paris. Also, Maxine Martin's toy train: a child killed by zombies? It would explain her hatred.
- Character: Amy is as manic pixie dream-girl as ever but her involvement with the Undead Prophet lends her a dark edge; there may be trouble ahead.
- LMAO: Kieran's dad reciting 'emotional" advice that he had obviously read in a handbook. Sweet, and funny Best Line: Vicar Oddie: 'When you drug a wolf, it stays a wolf.

drama. It feels right, though, and is handled well, with none of the things - save for a bit of expositional dialogue for new viewers - that made In The Flesh such unique TV compromised. Indeed, its feel is still intimate and its script still observant and darkly wry. A scene, for example, in which Kieran puts a towel over his mirror before removing his make-up says more than words ever could; while another, in which Maxine disposes of a rogue rotter with a drill, shows that Mitchell is ready to have a bit more fun.

And that confidence. above all, is what makes the death of BBC Three just so frustrating. Series one now

feels like mere set-up - here is where In The Flesh truly begins. Long may it be allowed to groan. Stephen Kelly

YOU HAVE BEEN WATCHING... THE ORIGINALS

SFX's Facebook, Twitter and forum users on the N'Orleans vampire show

- It's made me laugh, cry and hold my pillow. Christina Walker
- More than a little formulaic Like watching synchronised swimming. Twenty episodes of treading water. John Finnan
- One of the better shows on The CW right now. Love the antihero angle. Vesper Lvnd
- Still finding its feet but keeping me watching so far!
- Better than the current season of TVD. No character is genuinely safe and anything could happen. David G Paul
- It's gripping and I like the family focus (however twisted
- that family might be). Hayley desperately needs more to do. though. Lanta
- It works because you don't quite know what any of the characters will do because they're only working for themselves. Kevinj
- Better than the current season of TVD. Darker, funnier, sexier
- and better storylines. Constant
- Mint! Christian Whitworth
- Mehl Rose Strazzeri
- Definitely original! Not many shows can pull off having witches werewolves and vampires all in one city! Lauren Attwood
- Could be a bit more edgy or adult, but not in this time slot I guess. Robb Cruse
- TVD's baby is quickly finding its feet and settling well in its hometown, but where are the wolves? Megan Pear
- More adult than TVD and ver intense. Angela Winters





Game Of Thrones

The serial shocker returns

EJOICE! JOFFREY BARATHEON - fantasy fiction's most loathsome, eminently slappable despot - is worm food, poisoned at his own, farcical wedding by his uncle Tyrion and former fiancée Sansa (unwittingly), Petyr Baelish (definitely) and Lady Olenna (probably). Never has a character's grisly demise left such a colossal grin on my face.

Joffrey's death has been a long time coming. They say time heals all wounds, but the uber-shit's insistence on picking at the festering sore and opening several new ones every time he opened his jerk mouth ensured there was never cause to sympathise with him. Or react any other way than by singing "Ding dong, the twit is dead" when his insides became his outsides at the end of "The Lion

And The Rose". The euphoric joy was tempered by Cersei pointing the finger of blame straight at Tyrion, but even that couldn't undermine the sense that, for one brief moment at least, justice has finally prevailed.

All credit to actor Jack Gleeson - in lesser hands Joffers could have been a clown, but under Gleeson he was a monster. His scrawny limbs, sickening smile, puffed up body

language and extravagant garments made it clear he was always a boy playing a king. He made the show's most sadistic character feel terrifyingly real (something you can't say for Iwan Rheon's Ramsay Snow, who falls on completely the wrong side of ridiculous). Gleeson has said he's giving up acting now his reign over Westeros has ended; if it turns out to be true Joffrey was one heck of a swan song.

The first three episodes of season four (all I've seen at the time of writing) have proven the paciest opening to a season yet. It's an unwritten rule that Game Of Thrones saves its biggest, most dramatic moments for

episode nine (Ned's beheading, the battle of Blackwater and the Red Wedding), which makes Joffrey's shock death at the end of just the second episode all the more surprising. If showrunners David Benioff and DB Weiss have started as they mean to go on, there's a lot more blood left to be spilled over the coming weeks. Jordan Farley

BONUS FEATURES

- Boo! Get Off! The new Daario Naharis (Michael Huisman) is a bit blandsome for my liking. At least Ed Skrein had the charisma the exotic sellsword needs.
- Top Performance: Obervn Martell, on the other hand has been cast perfectly, and is easily this season's most intriguing new player.
- Highlight: The Hound and Arva's bar room brawl at the end of episode one might just be *Thrones*' best fight yet. Tense, brutal and a defining moment for the young Stark girl.
- Best Line: Lady Olenna: 'The world is overflowing with horrible things, but they're all a tray of cakes next to death.

BROADCAST UK: TUESDAYS ON WATCH (FROM 6 MAY) US: OFF AIR

Almost Human

Karl Urban: sci-fi's unluckiest actor?

OU HAVE TO WONDER IF KARL Urban's career highs and lows are giving him a rollercoaster belly. At times he's on top of the world, with roles in such films as The Lord Of The Rings and Star Trek shining away on his CV. And yet he's also been kicked in the groin - hard - by such flops as The Chronicles Of Riddick and, sadly, Dredd. Escaping into television might have seemed like a safe option for him, particularly when he'd get to star alongside the excellent Michael Ealy in a show, created by Fringe supremo JH Wyman, that riffs on Philip K Dick and Blade Runner.

But nobody watched it.

Okay, so a few people did, but not enough to appease Fox. (Note: as I write this, Almost



Human hasn't been cancelled, and hopefully my cynicism will be wrong and Fox will give it a second year... but pigs, or even electric sheep, will probably flv.)

The heartbreaking thing is that Almost Human is an utter joy. Sure, it's a bit shaky

BONUS FEATURES

In-jokes: Philip K Dick homages litter the series The Deckard Gardens Hotel for example. There's also a Gary Numan-referencing club. Are Friends Electric? In Case You Were

Wondering... The question of whether Dorian is anatomically correct is answered far earlier in the series than you'd expect And the answer is a

Best Lines: John: "Is all of that for one person? What do you do with it? Dorian: "Probably the same thing you do with yours. Nothing.'

here and there and the show didn't do itself any favours by making its second episode about pouty, booby sexbots, thus alienating a chunk of weary female viewers (although to be fair, Fox did air them out of sequence, as they also did with Firefly all those years ago). But Urban's cop, John Kennex, is delightfully gruff, and his android partner, Ealy's Dorian, is more nuanced with more personality than many human characters in cop shows. The show's first year built up an intriguing arc

plot, the special effects were cool and its future-city is a fascinating place. But yet again, poor Urban has somehow managed to take on a project that nobody seems to care about, only on the small screen this time. You really have to feel for the guy.

Although saying that, he's still Dr McCov. Let's hope that's enough to keep him sleeping soundly at night. Jayne Nelson





SPURIOUS AWARDS



HUNGRIEST CREATURES OF THE MONTH

Never get between dragons and their dinner on Game Of Thrones.



SECOND HUNGRIEST CREATURE OF THE MONTH

Similarly, never get between the Hound and roast chicken on Game Of Thrones.



CHARACTER MOST IN NEED OF SOME SUN OF THE MONTH

Sally's looking, ahem, pale as a ghost on Being Human.



CAMEO OF THE MONTH

Harley Quinn popped up in the Suicide Squad episode of Arrow. Who's next, Mistah J?



MAKESHIFT WEAPON OF THE MONTH

Not only does Reese use this tin of Sloppy Joes to withstand attack from a cleaver on Person Of Interest, but he knocks his assailant out by lobbing it at his head too!

• ATYPICAL KILLER OF THE MONTH

A knife-wielding nun: would you expect anything less from Supernatural?



of Count Riario on Da Vinci's





WORST MAKEOVER OF THE MONTH

Mike Peterson may be one of SHIELD's better characters, but his Deathlok costume looks rubbish.



MOST SURREAL MOMENT OF THE MONTH

Here's Stiles playing Go on top of a giant tree trunk inside a giant white room on Teen Wolf. Er, why?



BEST IMPRESSION OF THE MONTH

Leonardo's impersonation Demons had us in fits.



• KILLER MONKEY OF THE MONTH

You would not want to meet this primate from Once Upon A Time in a wood..



OF THE MONTH

Don't worry, you're not seeing double, there really are two Alecs in this scene from Continuum Just imagine the mischief they could get up to.

GRATUITOUS SHIRTLESSNESS OF THE MONTH

Robbie Amell follows in his cousin's footsteps by, er, taking his shirt off as much as possible on The Tomorrow People.



FACE ONLY A MOTHER COULD LOVE OF THE MONTH

Ugly and seven years' bad luck? Things aren't good for this Wesen on Grimm.



FASHION MISTAKE OF THE MONTH

Sunglasses with light-up frames? Almost Human's ultimate hipster, surely.





1950s Movie Posters



RICHARD EDWARDS, DEPUTY EDITOR

I have a great big *Forbidden Planet* poster on my living room wall. It takes pride of place above the sofa and has cameoed in several *SFX* Couch Potato features. As much as I like the movie, however, that's not the reason it's

there – I just think it's an absolutely magnificent piece of artwork, one of the true classics from an era responsible for many of the best movie posters of all time.

There can't be many adverts that do a better job than selling their product than this. It's got an exotic alien landscape, a sky packed with unfamiliar stars and planets, and an intriguing space-age building. In the foreground, meanwhile, a chunky robot carries a comatose woman. We don't know why – we don't need to know why – but it's one hell of an image.

Then again, the film on the poster isn't really *Forbidden Planet* – and that's another reason I love the poster. It's such a misleading representation of the film that these days it would probably land someone in hot water with the Advertising Standards Agency. The planetscape bears only a passing resemblance to Altair IV; Robby the Robot has much more of a face than he ever does on screen; and aside from her minidress, the woman in Robby's arms looks nothing like the movie's only female cast member, Anne Francis. And along with *The Day The Earth Stood Still*, it's a prime example of the '50s trope of giant robots carrying beautiful women – neither Robby nor Gort ever

got their hands on a lady, but nobody seemed to care.

the Forbidden Planet poster - it was an anonymous artist on MGM's staff. Poster designing greats of the '50s included Saul Bass responsible for classics like North By Northwest and Anatomy Of A Murder, and Reynold Brown, behind the likes of The Creature From The Black Lagoon and The Incredible Shrinking Man. ▶ The Robby the Robot on the Forbidden Planet poster is actually a mirror image of his movie counterpart - the

FACT ATTACK!

It's not known who painted

wrong way round.

B-movie producer Samuel Z
Arkoff had a topsy-turvy
approach to movie
production. The name came
first, followed by the posters
and advertising campaign.
Then they'd get round to
writing the screenplay.

designer got his "ears" the

With sci-fi riding a wave of popularity at the time, studios were unafraid to sell their movies (B- or otherwise) on their robots. spaceships (The War Of The Worlds), giant ants carrying people in their mandibles (Them!) and even a giant woman straddling a flyover (Attack Of The 50 Foot Woman). Actors were totally secondary to the real stars of the movies: monsters, aliens and mutants presented in bold, simple designs that looked way better than they ever did on screen. Now that heavily Photoshopped, focus group-friendly character montages have become the norm, I can't help feeling envious of a time when poster art lived up to the "art" part of its billing.

FORBIODEN PLANET WARREN STEVENS INTRODUCING ROBBY, THE ROBOT CYRIL HUME

SEE YOU NEXT MONTH! WEDNESDAY 28 MAY DETAILS ON PAGE 31

FULL-CAST AUDIOBOOKS BASED ON THE CLASSIC TV SERIES



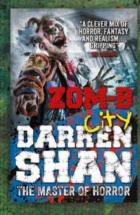
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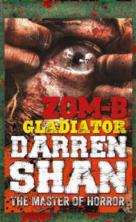


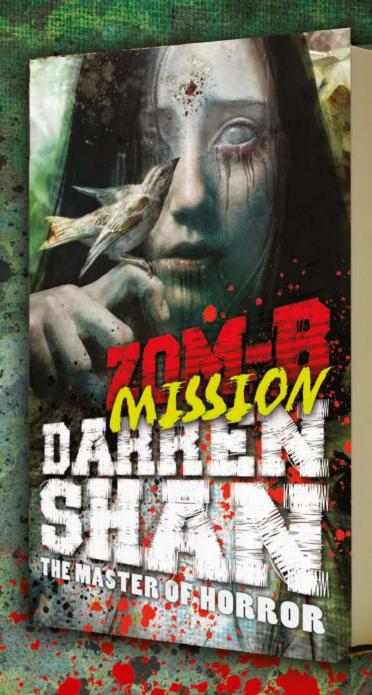












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